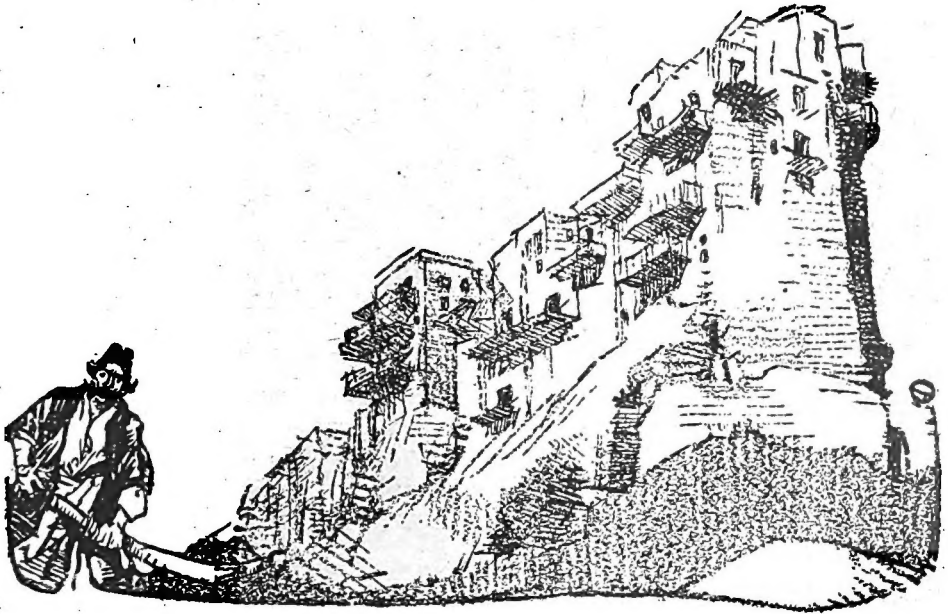


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A Romance of New York and Teheran

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CHAPTER I

JUDY

AT ONE end of the mezzanine balcony that encircles the rotunda of a New York hotel is an ornate bronze cage. In this cage they keep a stenographer—not the official stenographer, but a casual typist for the convenience of guests. Like the bronze

cage, she is more often ornamental than of any apparent use in the scheme of things, for down-stairs are two pushing and accessible young women to whom most of the business letters accrue. But now and then a quiet-loving man wanders up-stairs bringing her his correspondence to type; or, more rarely, a woman slips in with letters to copy; and thus the wolf is kept from the door of the bronze cage.

It is not a lucrative position. There are

in it neither rich returns nor glory, but many somnolent, idle hours; and it was because of these idle hours that it exactly suited Judy Gray.

For there were two of Judy Gray. One of her was a stenographer, rather small and pale, resigned to captivity in the bronze cage, with nimble fingers and a little flickering, impersonal smile for a customer, with tired, sea-green eyes, and hair that might have crowned her with a coronet like satiny beech leaves had she not been too preoccupied and too indifferent to care for it.

The other one of her saw visions.

At these times, although she sat behind her typewriter staring straight down the red velvet vista of the mezzanine balcony to the clanging elevator doors, she was conscious of no detail of the scene. Her pale face would grow vivid, her gray-green eyes widen, the pupils distending and growing brilliant, the irises changing to violet with little flecks of fire in them. Her hands would be clenched in her lap, and her breath would be held lest the vision fail her, the divine fire flicker out before she could catch and revel in its glow.

In these moments she looked not at all like Miss Gray, the typist. And for the moment she was not Miss Gray. She was the audience, the sole onlooker at a tremendous drama. The theater was the world and the drama was Adventure. Her own brain supplied the stage-setting, the book of the play, the actors and the thunder. She was both audience and stage-director.

As pictures unroll from a cinematograph there passed before her mind's eye strange countries and sinister seas; men fighting and weapons gleaming, bandits and buccaneers and rocking skies—a curious kind of vision for a girl to be seeing!

First they would come as out of a fog, higgledy-piggledy, a coral reef alongside a northern fiord, a Chinese pirate on the heels of a British midshipman, lost treasure crowding spoils of war. Then, as she watched, order and form would come out of chaos, the actors would troop to their places and a story would be born.

Only her friends among the bell-boys knew there were two of Judy Gray. They carried about in their pockets certain tattered tales—"A Mystery of the Solomon Islands" and "Wreckers' Reef" were their favorites—all signed J. Gray. They were wont to smooth out these worn pages with a proud

hand as they explained the mysteries of authorship.

"She dopes 'em all out herself," No. 9 would say. "Yes, sir, right off the bat! I've seen her writin' 'em. Sure, you can take this one, but you've gotta bring it back, see? For I helped to write that story, in a way—she told me how it was goin' to end!"

No. 9 would then walk circumspectly past the bronze cage, peeling a wistful glance at J. Gray. If she gazed with big, unseeing eyes straight ahead of her, he would go on his way softly, warning off a new boy that would fain have hailed her. But if she sat alone and obviously uninspired, nibbling pensively at the end of a pencil, he would stop by her typewriter for some little talk of pearl-divers, of smugglers and false lights, of adventures by sea and caravan, until the necessities of a workaday world forced him back to the post of duty.

She was not a genius, working in obscurity, to burst presently full-fledged upon a startled world. She never used the phrase "my art;" her thoughts never hovered enviously over the list of best sellers; what she produced was not literature, and she knew it. But it stirred even the blasé blood of the bell-boys; for deep in Judy Gray was a vivid sense of life, of color and movement, and a hunger seldom found in the heart of a girl for the highways of the world, for the free wind that blows down the aisles of the sea, for the far corners of heathen lands. She saw visions because of this hunger; and she wrote to feed it.

And every day from nine to five she breathed the overheated air of the mezzanine balcony in the Great Southern Hotel; and every evening from five to nine she shivered in the clammy privacy of a boarding-house bedroom; and the *wanderlust* in her soul thrived on starvation.



ON AN afternoon in February she sat taking a dictation from a fat commercial traveler. To-day she was merely a hireling letter-writer, tapping away at her machine like a tame little woodpecker. Her heavy brown hair, twisted into a knot at the nape of her neck, was roughened and loose from the stress of the day; a lead-pencil had smudged the tip of her nose; the steam-heated air of the balcony had taken the color from her cheeks.

One would never have suspected her of

"The Mystery of the Solomon Islands." Gone was the fire from her eyes, gone the vivid expectancy of her parted lips. She typed four letters concerning neckties, addressed them deftly while the drummer waited, and smiled impersonally at his parting sally. Then, when he had gone, she drew a chair to the side of her cage, and, leaning her head against its metal curlicues, she stared wanly down into the rotunda.

Outside the hotel a station-bus had just whirled up under the porte-cochère. A stream of incoming guests flowed across the tiled floor in the direction of the room clerks. She eyed them with small interest. Four years of watching guests arrive and depart from the Great Southern had given Judy Gray considerable skill in card-indexing their types; but the experience had dulled to a degree her interest in men, as men—women she never looked at twice.

Somewhere down the length of the mezzanine balcony a window was open, letting in a draft of damp, cool air. It bore a suggestion of melting snow, a faint, subtle hint of Spring on the way. A woman near the telephone-booth was wearing a bunch of violets. Judy Gray moved impatiently in her chair and pressed her forehead to the cool bronze metal.

The old Spring call to be up and out upon the highroad stirred within her sharply. And across the rotunda No. 9 charged the revolving doors, snatched a traveling-bag from an unseen hand and came staggering back with it in triumph.

Judy's glance fell upon No. 9 and his booty. At once some of the weariness left her eyes; she sat up and looked hungrily at the object No. 9 struggled with. It was a large portmanteau, bearing an unmistakable air of the foreign maker. It was battered as an old campaigner; every inch of it cried the miles it had wandered—and down in one corner shone a big blue-and-white swastika—the magic label of an Oriental steamship line.

Judy, peering at the swastika, breathed a little "Ah!" of envy. Then a happy look came into her face, for a vision was on the way! She half closed her eyes, and the crowded rotunda gave way to a picture of battered steamers from the world's end unloading bales and bundles wrapped in all the raw colors of the East. She could hear the grinding of winches and the creaking of cargo-blocks. She could smell nutmeg and

cinnamon, the pungent odor of matting and rattan, of jute and hemp—all mixed with the racy salt of the sea.

She could see the great wharves crawling alive with the figures of Lascar and Malay, Chinaman and Arab moving lithely amid ingots of tin from Penang, bags of coffee from the Malabar coast, gambier from Singapore, bales of bamboo from Burma and coir from the Straits Settlements. Then, as swiftly as a swallow's shadow, the dream passed, and she found herself peering eagerly through the scroll-work of her cage at a man striding across the rotunda in the wake of No. 9.

 HE WAS tall, lank and yet compactly knitted, with a fine, powerful stride and strong shoulders that he carried with an almost imperceptible list to the left. He had a face that was the color of coffee, lean and sun-bitten; and there was an indefinitely foreign air about his gray tweeds. Judy watched him as he wrote his name at the desk and stood reading a telegram the clerk handed him.

She approved of the way he smoked his cigar—gripped firmly in a corner of his salient, unsmiling mouth. Judy had had opportunity a-plenty to study the psychology of the cigar, and she liked a man to smoke as he should stand on his feet—strong and straight.

"It has been a long time since he saw New York," she said to herself.

He was sitting now in one of the huge leather chairs, with one long leg thrown over the other, smoking steadily and watching the scene before him rather somberly. He somehow reminded her of a man looking on at a scene that, familiar enough to him in the past, had grown strange and a little alien during a long absence. That he had got out of American ways was evident from his manner of sitting or standing.

Among the men that lounged restlessly, nervously chewing their cigars or fidgeting with their papers, he was conspicuous because he knew how to be still. He had the immobility of the Oriental; but his eyes were not at all of the Orient. They were Yankee eyes—shrewd, deep and a clear hazel-gray, with a quizzical effect in the crow's-feet at their corners. They counteracted somewhat the hint of hardness in his face and made his unsmiling lips seem less grim.

Judy, looking down at him, put her head on one side with an air of critical appraisal. Then she gave a little satisfied, whimsical laugh.

"I'll bet," she said, "I'll bet he can fight!"

She then went back to her typewriter. Her lips, her eyes, her cheeks had grown vivid and happy. For the man with the sun-bronzed face and the swastika on his traveling-bag had set her on the trail of a wonderful new story. All the rest of the afternoon she lived in a never-never land of her own imagining. Bell-boys passing her cage forbore to speak to her, for she sat in front of her typewriter tapping away like a mad woodpecker, the joy of creation in her eyes and a green lead-pencil stuck skewer-wise in her hair.

At five o'clock she came back to earth, hooded her machine for the night and stretched her tired fingers, put on a jacket and a hat with a parrakeet's wing stuck in it, pulled on her rubbers and gloves, tucked under her arm the first volume of Burton's "Journey to El Medinah"—and hesitated in the doorway of the bronze cage.

Then she crossed the cage and looked down into the rotunda. Her eyes searched the busy place for a few minutes before they lighted on the man with the sun-bitten face and the foreign-looking clothes. Then she did something she could not have explained even to herself. She beckoned No. 9 up to the mezzanine balcony and pointed the man out to him.

"Jimmy, I want to know his name, please," she said.

No. 9 hurried away. In a minute he was back beside her with the information that the gentleman's name was John Savidge.

"John Savidge? Um-m—the name will do. It's a good fighting kind of name. Where is he from, Jimmy?"

"Chicago."

Her face fell ludicrously. She turned upon No. 9 an expression that was affronted and incredulous.

"Chicago! You must be wrong, Jimmy! Why, it might be Mandalay, or Cape Town, or Delhi, but not Chicago—never!"

She turned away from the puzzled Jimmy and went sadly to the elevator, and, disillusioned, home. It took her the evening to get over the shock of Chicago. For in her own delectable imaginings, in the new story for which he and his bag were responsible,

John Savidge had figured all the afternoon as the Man from Bagdad.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM BAGDAD

DURING the next week she wrote him into a fine tale of mutiny and murder in the Yellow Sea. He figured in detail. He was the only man she had ever seen that she had no need to touch up for the purposes of fiction. He not only fitted the part, but inspired it. And yet she could not have told why. There was nothing of the swashbuckler in him; if there was anything conspicuous about him it was his conspicuous quiet. And for all the facts she possessed concerning Mr. John Savidge, Chicago, he might have been the proprietor of a Wabash Avenue hardware-store.

But deep in her heart she knew better. And, characteristically, she had no curiosity concerning facts. For her purposes it was much safer merely to watch him from the mezzanine balcony. As long as she had no closer acquaintance with the lean, sunburnt traveler, he would remain the Man from Bagdad, full of inspiring possibilities, a perfect figure on which to drape the cloak of adventure. She was therefore rather disconcerted than otherwise when she looked up one afternoon to see him standing in the doorway of the bronze cage with a sheaf of letters in his hand.

Judy had a manner when she chose to assume it that was an effective discouragement of anything except the business in hand. Her eyes became cold, her face impassive, and the very poise of her hands over the typewriter keys was an invitation to be businesslike.

She now put on this manner like a mask, while underneath it she hugged herself gleefully as she thought of the part Mr. John Savidge was playing with such serene unconsciousness. But she might have spared herself the trouble of assuming any manner whatsoever, for the Man from Bagdad was apparently no more conscious of her personally than of the man that took him up in the elevator. He looked over her head as he dictated a letter crisply, took it from her hand when it was finished and strode with a preoccupied air out of the bronze cage.

Judy went contentedly back to the tale of mutiny and murder in the Yellow Sea. And

the Man from Bagdad walked around the rotunda aimlessly a few times and then sat him down in a leather chair with a rather grim and lonesome expression in his eyes.

The next day he required her services, and the next. Almost every day for a week she wrote letters for him—some of them containing the names of towns that reminded her of a page from the Arabian Nights and tantalized her imagination with vague pictures—while underneath her professional mask she nursed a sly delight in the situation.

They might have gone on thus, he looking over her head while she wove him into ever fresh webs of adventure, for the remainder of his stay at the Great Southern, had he not chanced upon her one day in one of her great moments, at the very instant, in fact, when a new story in all its gorgeous possibilities unrolled itself before her delighted vision.



IT HAD been an afternoon of few letters, rain outside and a somnolent quiet along the mezzanine balcony. She sat huddled in front of her idle machine, both hands clasping a knee, one foot swinging excitedly, a long pencil stuck skewer-wise in her brown hair. She was staring straight ahead of her with eyes that saw a yellow river, queer-rigged craft, a red sunrise, and in front of it a battle. It was the most satisfying battle she had been able to conjure up in many a day, and her blood quickened as she watched it.

Pirates from Hongkong harbor crowded as thick as swarming bees about a lone trading-sloop, swarmed and hacked with outlandish weapons and pierced the air with a shrill and dreadful clatter. She saw the shiny, naked body of their leader poised on deck; saw the queer-rigged craft swinging in a tightening circle; saw the lining up of fighting men on the squat deck of the sloop and the red light of sunrise on steel soon to be crimson from another source.

"Are you busy, Miss Gray?"

She turned her head with a start. John Savidge, standing in the doorway, caught as no one else had ever done the full look of vivid expectancy, the entranced, wide-eyed delight in her vision that Judy Gray's face always wore when a story leaped into being. For that one instant she was beautiful. But even as Savidge looked at her the light died out of her face.

She rubbed her eyes with a gesture quite like a child's on being suddenly awakened, and he saw her turn again into a little pale stenographer, resigned to captivity in the bronze cage, still and self-possessed. She gave a fluttering sigh, glanced at the sheaf of letters in his hand and ran two sheets of paper under the platen of her machine. But the man continued to lean against the side of the door, looking down at her with his quizzical half-smile. Absent-mindedly he thrust a brown hand into a vest-pocket—the gesture of the habitual smoker, who, in a puzzled moment, seeks the familiar counsel of a cigar.

"Queer," he drawled in his level voice, "I never noticed it before."

"What?" Surprised, she looked around at him.

"That you are beautiful."

It was exactly the tone he might have used if he had discovered some morning a new and lovely aspect in a familiar landscape. He looked at her gravely and impersonally; but in his eyes there was a spark of whimsical humor.

A look of immense and startled astonishment flashed into her face. There was a brief struggle between her professional manner and the side of her that was girlish and natural—and the girl won. The corners of her mouth quivered into a mischievous smile.

"Well, you're the very first one to discover it!" she said.

Then she retreated abruptly into her professional shell and clicked back the carriage of her typewriter severely.

He took a cigar from his pocket and reached for a match with an absent-minded, leisurely gesture. Then he looked at her from under his quizzical brows and snapped out the flame of the match.

"Smoke if you like!" Then she added with a touch of scorn, "They all do."

"Do they?" he drawled, with a lift of one shoulder. "Well, I never do what *they* do. Will you take this letter, please?"



MECHANICALLY her fingers took down the words he dictated; but the living half of her mind flew off to thoughts of its own. The voice at her elbow dictated:

"I should advise a freight quay similar to the one we built in Hongkong harbor—"

He paused, thinking of the next sentence.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN FROM BAGDAD TALKS

He did not know that Hongkong was a word to conjure with, that it sent the mind of the girl at his elbow flashing back to a tightening circle of a queer-rigged craft, a red sunrise and a royal fight. He was barely conscious that she had turned sharply until he met her eyes, wide and eager, fixed on him.

"Please," she cried breathlessly, "what do Chinese pirates fight with?"

"Good Lord!" He stared at her with a look of the utmost astonishment. "Why do you want to know?"

A vivid tide of color swept over her face.

"I—I beg your pardon!" she said hastily; and prompted him—"a freight quay similar to the one we built in Hongkong harbor—, yes?"

He waved away the letter.

"What have you to do with Chinese pirates?" he insisted.

"Never mind," she answered. "I—I forgot."

He nodded gravely.

"I see."

Settling himself comfortably in his chair, he thrust his hands deep in his pockets, while his gaze wandered off over her head. His voice began its level drawl:

"There's a muddy river running into Hongkong harbor and it's alive with 'em. I've seen 'em fight at sunrise. They left the water streaked with blood. They've got a kind of chattering war-cry, and they're out upon you from the reeds like a swarm of yellow-jackets. They fight with almost anything—antiquated guns, cutlasses, bamboo rods tipped with iron—"

The girl's fingers dropped from the keys. She sat listening hungrily, her gray-green eyes staring down the length of the balcony. For ten minutes the impersonal voice drawled on, feeding her hungry mind with pictures of that yellow river and its sinister craft, until every detail of her surroundings had faded away and she stood with him on the deck of a reeking junk and drank deep of carnage.

"Well—well—where were we?"

He sat up briskly and looked at her with his cool gaze. She became at once her professional self, with fingers poised over the typewriter keys, and only a faint afterglow in her cheeks. He took up his dictation. To all outward appearances he had forgotten her existence as he took the last letter from her hand and went on his way with a short, "Thanks. Good afternoon."

THE next day he came down the length of the mezzanine floor with his deliberate stride and paused in the doorway of the bronze cage. Instead of the usual sheaf of letters he held in his hand a copy of a tattered weekly. Characteristically he plunged without preliminaries into what he had to say.

"How in thunder," he exclaimed, "did you ever hear of Mekran?"

She threw a dismayed glance at the paper in his hand and recognized the first page of "Lost in Baluchistan," by J. Gray. No. 9 had betrayed her.

"I read about it in a book," she stammered.

He nodded grimly and sat down.

"I thought so. Otherwise you'd never have made your hero and heroine escape inland over the plain of Mekran. They'd have died of thirst within a week after they left the coast! And that open boat you speak of—do you remember the pictures of spouting whales in the old geographies? Well, you couldn't go out in a boat along the whole shore of Mekran without being surrounded by spouting whales!

"There are plenty of high-pooped native craft like ancient galleys dodging into its shallow waters—you'd like them; they carry slave-traders and gun-runners a-plenty, but no one ever goes back of the range of yellow hills. It's the hottest land of all Asia. The sand rolls in waves across a sterile plain. There are no oases. The country is dry, desolate, damned. I know—I've seen it. Buried in those yellow sands are the ruins of great cities, cities that Cyrus may have pillaged and Alexander burned—as they say he burned Persepolis."

Judy's fingers instinctively felt for her pencil; her eyes glittered hungrily. "Have you seen them, those cities, the gulf and the whales spouting?"

"Yes, and they're damned—excuse me!—extremely lonesome!"

"Please don't! When you've dreamed about places until you can shut your eyes and see them, you don't want to hear they're not what you want them to be, do you?"

He gave a short, dry chuckle.

"I don't dream about places. It's my business to see 'em!" he said.

She threw out her arms impatiently toward the noisy rotunda.

"And I! I've lived on pavements all my life, or in places like this. I've never seen anything!"

"Except pirates and battles and Baluchistan; and you write about them!"

Her reserved, pale mask seemed to crack and be consumed as if by a sudden flaring up of a long-suppressed rebellion. She turned upon him fiercely:

"And so would you if it kept you from going mad with the sameness of things! Suppose you lived in a treadmill, and one day you discovered you had only to shut your eyes to float out into another world where there are color and things happening, glaring light, and men dying, not in a bed between brick walls, but under the sun or the moon!

"Oh, I suppose there's something queer about me, but I could always see with my eyes shut. It only takes a little thing to start the pictures. A few lines out of a book or a shadow in the street and I'm thousands of miles from here, thank the Lord! I know the stuff I write isn't very good, but the boys like it and some of it sells.

"But that isn't the reason I write about Baluchistan and Hongkong and the South Seas. I suppose I write about the ends of the world because I'm hungry for—for—I don't know what—something different—life, maybe!"

Leaning in the doorway, he considered her thoughtfully. "Romance? I suppose all girls dream about romance."

She looked up scornfully.

"I got over girls' dreams a long time ago. The adventures I see when I shut my eyes aren't pink-and-white ones. I don't want the things most girls want. I couldn't write a love-story to save my life. I wish I'd been born a man!"

He looked at her, so very feminine in every detail, slender-fingered, indefinably fragrant—and frowned.

"Don't talk nonsense!" he said curtly.

He could not have explained it, but it hurt him to hear her wishing she had been born a man. He continued to look at her reflectively. He was thinking of the waste of beauty there was in the world. This girl was beautiful when she was happy and her soul on fire.

If she had been born under a kinder star there would never be that hard set to her

chin or the restless look in her eyes. Her hair would be burnished and coiffured; her cheeks pink, her skin exquisite; her slender, ink-stained fingers would have polished, gleaming leaf nails, her rounded body the perfect clothes appropriate to it.

She would be guarded and happy and as pretty a girl as ever took tea expensively in the drawing-rooms of the Great Society. He looked into her face with his keen, speculative gaze and saw that the artificial light of the mezzanine balcony brought out a violet shadow under her eyes.

"What you need," he said gruffly, "is good beefsteaks and fresh air. Do you want them?"

"I'm not starving for food!" she said indignantly.

And he went away as abruptly as he had appeared.

X THAT was the beginning of a sort of friendship between Julia Savage and the Man from Baghdad. He typed for him many letters and reports of the Eastern Securities Company; and often when the letters were done they sat in the bronze cage and ranged the world together. From Cape Farewell to Van Diemen's Land; from the Gulf of Pechili to the Black Sea; from the Straits Settlements to Repulse; from Cape Town, St. Petersburg, Tiflis, Constantinople! The names thrilled her. One afternoon—he had told her about a host of caravans in the Khyber Pass—she burst out despairingly,

"Oh, the stories I could write, if I had seen what you have seen! Why haven't you written your life?"

Savidge laughed.

"Because I've lived it. A man can't write about how he got up, worked, and went to bed, does he? I've been too busy to juggle with words. I'll give the credit to you for what they're worth. That's all I could tell you——"

He stopped abruptly and looked at her as if something in her eager face had turned his mind on a new tack.

"The best story of 'em all isn't finished yet. Some day I'll tell it to you; but I'll have to promise not to write it until I've left the country."

She flicked some dust carefully from her typewriter.

"Are you going away soon?"

Savidge walked over to the edge of the

balcony and stood staring down into the busy rotunda. The short day was drawing to a close and the lights, like clustered moons, had been switched on below. There was an increase of cheerful bustle, as women in furs and pretty hats drifted down a corridor from afternoon tea in the reception rooms and men hurried to finish their business before the dinner-hour. For a long time Savidge stood looking down at the scene.

"On the other side the world I'm overdue," he quoted under his breath.

Then with a shrug of his shoulders, as if he threw off a sudden oppression, he turned to Judy.



SHE was silently pinning on her hat. He watched her tugging on a pair of little rubbers, adjusting her veil with deft fingers. The typewriter stood shrouded for the night. Judy's coat hung over a chair. With the eclipse of the typewriter and the appearance of Judy's things—her gloves and veil and rubbers—a different atmosphere seemed to have crept subtly into the bronze cage.

"You're going home, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes; it's meat-pie night at my boarding-house, and if I'm late it will be more pie than meat for me!"

She took up her coat with a sigh. He held it for her and then walked toward the door. Suddenly he turned with brisk decision, a rare smile on his lips.

"You're going out to dinner with me, Miss Gray. Now wait! I know what you're going to say: You're not in the habit of taking supper with your customers. As if I didn't know that! But to-night—is to-night. It's a queer thing, but I'm lonesome. Never know what it is, as a rule, to want company; but to-night—well, I don't want to eat alone to-night."

She stood looking up at him with wide, doubtful eyes. As he noticed again the faint violet shadows under them he put out an authoritative hand.

"Come, you look tired. I don't think meat-pie is what you need to-night. And I'm sick of eating alone. Do you know, Miss Gray, it has been four years since I saw a woman's face across the table, if you don't count a steamer table. And a month from now I'll be where men don't dine with women. You'll come, won't you?"

She thought it over wistfully. And then

she looked up with a sudden frankness that was charming.

"I should love to come! I'm so tired of a boarding-house! But it will have to be some place not too grand. I'm not dressed for dining out."

Darkness had already fallen when they stepped into the street. Lights were blazing up and down the avenue and the homeward rush had begun. The girl's eyes were very bright; she was frankly delighted to have escaped for one evening from the boarding-house meat-pie. As she trudged along beside him, talking gayly, his own spirits soared suddenly. He felt all at once like a boy with an unexpected holiday.

CHAPTER IV

THE RED-INK CRUISE

ACROSS the small table with its pink-hooded lights and glistening silver he saw her for the first time as a girl; not an industrious typist nor a dreamer of absurd adventures, but a woman with shining eyes and a wistful mouth. Details that he had not been aware of in the light of the mezzanine gallery came out under the shaded lamps of their quiet corner.

A whimsical turn to her smile; flecks of tawny fire in the gray-green iris of her eyes; the white slenderness of her throat; a cobwebby look to her hair, as if some one had blown clouds of cigarette-smoke through it. She had a square little chin and a way of looking squarely and frankly out of her gray eyes that he had never seen in a girl before. He liked her pleasure in the bright room and her honest enjoyment of the dinner he ordered.

They had a *filet mignon*, a Breton salad and a Nesselrode pudding, because Judy admitted never having tasted these dishes that are a commonplace to the haunter of restaurants. He pretended to an appetite, but most of the time he watched her for the sheer pleasure it gave him to see her eating away happily, to see the color deepen in her cheeks and the tired look leave her eyes.

A week before he would not have believed that he could get any enjoyment out of a tête-à-tête dinner with a girl; but now it seemed the most natural thing in the world to be sitting there listening to a girl's voice, dropping a word now and then himself, but mostly watching her smile, her little hands,

her shining eyes, or listening for her infrequent, rippling laugh. He had never known a woman before that could be sociably silent. Judy's silences were as companionable as her conversation; they gave him a luxurious feeling of rest and sympathy, as if after numerous bleak years he had got home.

The talk flowed without effort. They discovered a mutual interest in the great wanderers, Sir Richard Burton, Stevenson, Borrow, who, she admitted, was a little too puttering for her.

"He traveled with a microscope," she said, "and left his imagination at home!"

"And you—you'd travel like Mercury or Puck!" he smiled.

The stormy night outside their window emphasized the intimate quiet of their corner. All the selfish dinners he had eaten in solitude trooped before him, and all the lonely dinners to come suddenly oppressed him. And Judy had grown quiet.

Over the coffee they both fell silent, the girl's eyelids drooping as if she were tired. He began to wonder about her. Who were her friends; how did she live in the hours outside the mezzanine balcony; what pleasures did she have; what was her philosophy of life? Leaning back in his chair, he contemplated the enigma of the girl across the table until she looked up and met his eyes.

"Have you a mother and father?" he asked.

She accepted the question as simply as it was put.

"No, I have no one very near to me. My mother died when I was ten, my father two years ago. He had the *wanderlust*, too, poor old dad! Always wandering when he should have been working. And that is all he left me when he died—that and a wonderful collection of maps."

Her face lighted up. She pushed aside her coffee cup.

"You should see my maps! I've traveled all over the world on them. When I'm too tired to write I get out my bottle of red ink and——"

She stopped abruptly, looking sidewise at him with an embarrassed smile.

"Promise you won't laugh?"

"I never felt less like laughing in my life," he replied truthfully.

"Well, the red ink marks the trail I'm going to follow some day when I've saved

enough money. It will take a long time, but I'm going! Straight down the Pacific to the South Seas, across to Burma, then Mandalay——"

She drew a map on the table-cloth with the point of her fork.

Suddenly he put out his hand and laid it over the tracing fingers.

"Don't do it," he said curtly. "Adventure, the highways of the world, they're all very well in stories; but you don't know anything about the hardships and dangers. No—no, it won't do—for you. You're better off at home, with your own people."

"I haven't any home that you could call home."

"You might marry," he jerked out.

Judy nodded serenely.

"Of course! He had a flourishing grocery store; I believe he's getting rich now. I've had a nice little flat—a house, probably, by this time—with a rubber-plant. And each Summer we'd take a week at Atlantic City. Ugh! I should have hated it!"

"You'd have been safe!" said Savidge grimly.

Her voice was scornful.

"Oh! if that's all! I didn't think you would talk of safety! Why, I'm more afraid of the drudgery, the spirit-breaking sameness of my life than of anything else. It's only the stories, and the red-ink route on my maps that keep me from——"

"From what?"

She pushed back her chair.

"I'm afraid I've talked a lot of nonsense," she said wearily. "Shall we go?"

Savidge was writing something on a card. He gave it to her as he stood up.

"When you're on that red-ink cruise," he said with an effort at lightness, "if you're ever in any difficulty, you're to send for me. Send to each of these addresses; one of them will catch me, and I'll come. Remember, no matter where I am, I'll come!"

She took the card and read three addresses, in London, in Hongkong and in Teheran.

"Why," she laughed wistfully, "you're a citizen of the world, aren't you?"

"I suppose you can call it that." He smiled ironically as he helped her on with her coat. "Sometimes it's mighty lonesome being a citizen of the world," he added.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT GAME

THAT night she dreamed of being wrecked on an atoll in the South Pacific; and as is usual after an exciting dream-experience, she awoke to a mood of fathomless depression. The boarding-house breakfast-table was intolerable; the mezzanine floor seemed stifling with its noises and steam-heat; the bronze cage had become a prison.

All the morning she wrote letters about insurance and shoes, and all the afternoon she plodded on in a like dreary manner. At four o'clock she looked up to see Savidge coming down the balcony toward her.

His long stride was as deliberate as usual, but as he came in at the doorway of the bronze cage she had a thrill of intuition concerning him. She knew that something had happened to change him into a charged wire. He took the chair beside her with an air, alert and gay, that was unusual to him. Judy, glancing from the cablegram in his hand to his face, had an odd sense of expectancy as she poised her fingers over the keys.

"Dear West," he dictated, "I'm sorry not to see you and Mrs. West again, but I haven't time to run over to Lenox. I'm leaving for Teheran immediately. Besides, what would I do at Lenox? I don't play——"

He broke off and looked at Judy.

"What do they play at Lenox, Miss Gray?"

"In the Summer, tennis and golf, I suppose. And all the year around there are plenty of—beautiful women."

He shook his head.

"I don't play golf or croquet or tiddledewinks—I haven't the ability. I don't shake dice or play roulette or make love to—beautiful women; I haven't the luck." He leaned back in his chair as if he had forgotten the letter to West. His eyes turned whimsical. "But there's one game I do play——"

Judy looked at him from the tail of her eye:

"Poker?"

"Yes, but not with cards. I play my poker with bridges and railroads and Oriental governments." He glanced with a grim smile at the cablegram in his hand.

"It doesn't differ much from the card game; brain and bluff and chance are mixed in about equal proportion. Well, where did we stop?"

She prompted him and he went on:

"This morning I had a letter from Gholam Rezah's secretary. He warns me that Wolkonsky has left Teheran, supposedly for New York. It's an honor to have the biggest man in the Russian Secret Service on my trail, but I shall feel easier when I've finally landed the bids and contracts in Teheran. Fortunately the Company signed the last papers yesterday, and I can get away at once. It will be the devil's own game getting our papers through Russian territory and into Teheran.

"As you know, Russia has had her spies out for me for the last three years; but I'm certain I've thrown them off the track so far as Mekran is concerned. There's not an Asiatic or European government but would consider us lunatics to dream of stringing a railroad across Mekran; but in order to take no chances I left behind me the maps and blue-prints I made for the new road.

"After two attempts to smuggle them across the frontier (that was a lively business that I'll tell you about some time) I decided to cache them in the safest place in all Persia. If anything should happen to me I want you to know where they are so that you can get them for the Company. You will find them hidden in a vault in——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Your name is Judith, isn't it, Miss Gray?"

"Yes," she said wonderingly, and watched him as he wrote some figures on the back of an envelope.

He dictated them to her slowly, showing her how to space them. She looked up, as she wrote the last figure, with an irrepressible sparkle in her eyes.

"A cipher?"

Savidge nodded.

"Yes, and all the secret-service experts in the world couldn't make head nor tail to it without the key-word, which only you and I know."

"I!" Her eyes widened. "How do I know it?"

"It's your own name—the prettiest name I know. It makes a good key-word—spelled backward. Some day I'll teach you the cipher if you like."

"Shall I read those figures again?"

Her professional voice was not quite steady.

"It isn't necessary. They represent the name of a Lost City——"

"A Lost City! What a setting for a story!" she exclaimed under her breath.

 SAVIDGE dropped loosely into a chair in front of her. Resting his arms on the typewritten sheet, he looked at her with a long, quiet scrutiny. He seemed to have forgotten once more the letter to West.

"Most of anything in the world you want a chance to make stories, don't you?" he asked her.

She nodded, her face flaming to vivid interest. Savidge considered her for a deliberate moment. Then he said,

"Judy"—the name came from his lips as if he had loved it all his life—"Judy, I'm going to give you a chance at the biggest story you ever dreamed of. I'm going to give you a chance, and I think you'll take it. Listen carefully, now."

He spread out his letters and notes on the table between them, and she bent over her copy-pad. It was their concession to the passers-by in the mezzanine gallery. To all outward appearances they were hard at work. Savidge's voice sank to its quietest, most level drawl:

"There's a Lost City over in Persia, half buried in the sand. Kings have lived there; they say a King destroyed it finally at the lift of a woman's finger. But now, even its name is forgotten. I saw it once by moonlight—all that's left of it—a colossal flight of steps sweeping up to a great stone plateau, and on it outlandish columns black against the stars.

"The natives shun it for terror of its carved beasts and gods. It's left to the lion and the lizard; but they're keeping guard now over something three nations would pay big money to possess. For there's a game going on in Persia—a game of railroads. It's a little like chess and a good deal like poker. It's played with kings and castles—that's my Lost City; with bridges and steel rails for chips and a thousand square miles of Asia as a table!"

The crow's-feet came out about his eyes. He looked beyond Judy as if he could visualize the playing of that game.

"Have you ever stopped to think about

the poetry of railroads?" he went on. "Especially when it's a case of two lines of steel flung across a country that was old when Cleopatra was young, that has seen fabulous treasure carried century after century in caravan, that lies like an unopened jewel box in the paths of two great powers. That's Persia. The country that builds the first great Trans-Persian railroad will tap a gold-mine and hold the key to the political Asia. England and Germany have awakened to that fact, and Russia—well, Russia is on the job like a bear after a bee-tree!"

"But you never read anything about it in the papers!" she cried.

He smiled broadly:

"I should say not! The game is being played behind the door. I could count the most on one hand the diplomats and financiers that are really next to it. Over here there are certain great Captains that have a vision of some day controlling enough railroad and steamship lines to girdle the globe. To-day Persia is their game.

"They've been working for ten years underground, so to speak, and it looks now as if there were going to be a show-down. It means millions to them, to say nothing of a big link in the world-chain of railroads. That's why we're trying to raise the Game out of the Game. And I think—I think, Miss Judy Gray—we're going to do it!"

He met her eyes with his exultant gaze. She felt oddly excited, as if she had climbed a mountain peak and looked down into a new world.

"But you—" she said in a breathless voice—"what do you have to do with it?"

"I? Oh, I'm playing the Game for the honor of the service. It's all in the debt work for me. The Captains wanted an engineer and they sent me. For ten years I've held a roving commission to wander on and down the world's end until I mastered the railroad possibilities of the Orient. Well, I've come back with my report and they tell me it is good. Now——"

"Well?" she breathed, as he paused.

"Does all this bore you? I suppose you're wondering where the story begins—where you come in?"

"Where I come in?"

He paused as if he were considering the best way to put it.

"You tell me you want more than anything else to see the world so that you can write about it. Well, I'm offering you just

chance. I'm going back to Persia to see this thing through to the finish. And I'm going to take back with me my wife. How long will it take you to get ready, Miss Gray?"

She looked at him speechlessly.

"I—I don't understand!"

"It's very simple. You want something that I can give you; why shouldn't you take it?"

"Oh, you—you mustn't jest! Why, you don't know me! To you I'm——"

He made an impatient gesture.

"My dear young woman, leave that to me. I know you very much better than you think. I know you so well I'm not going to leave you here drudging away your youth, when I can give you what you're starving for. Over there in the East you'll have your chance!"



HE ROSE abruptly and bent ever over her shoulder as if to read from the typewritten page.

"Don't move, don't look up, Miss Gray, until I tell you to. There's a man at the end of the mezzanine floor, facing this way. When he goes down the stairs I want you to look at him and tell me if you've ever seen him before. There, he's going down—now, look!"

Judy glanced through the filigree work of the cage. A man in evening clothes was walking slowly down the main stairway. He was tall, broad-shouldered, slender-hipped, with a slightly sallow, olive-tinted skin; a very handsome man, she decided. A trim, black upturned mustache gave a touch of insolence to his expression. There was a noticeable *sang froid* in his walk and in the way he carried his shoulders.

"He's never been a guest here before; at least, not in my time," she said.

Savidge was looking after the stranger with a puzzled squint to his eyes.

"Now where have I seen you before? Somewhere, the other side of the world—I have it! Samarkand, the night the caravanserai was raided! That's the place! I saw his face through powder-smoke—he didn't wear evening dress that night!"

"What is he?" she whispered.

But Savidge was staring down into the rotunda.

"Yesterday, Samarkand; to-day, New York; to-morrow—well, if Allah bring us to meet, we meet!"

He turned briskly to Judy, a glint of excitement in his eyes.

"We'll go on with the letter, please. Where were we?"

"At the cipher."

"Thanks. Take this, please. 'I am sending a map and the key-word. I have to thank Mrs. West for her suggestion as to my new rôle. I had about exhausted the part of scholarly archeologist in that section of Persia and I'm going back as a married tourist. We leave to-night. My wife regrets not having the opportunity to meet Mrs. West'—you do regret it, don't you, Miss Gray?"

She turned toward him a white face and blazing eyes.

"Oh!" was all she said.

But the monosyllable was packed to the bursting point with indignation, protest and bewilderment. Savidge rose quietly, and very gently put a brown hand over hers.

"Judy, steady now! Don't you trust me?"

She looked at him, at his grave eyes first, and then at his mouth with its quizzical half-smile. Her gaze searched him through and through, as if it would find his soul and bring it up to the surface. Then she nodded, still looking at him wistfully.

"I do believe in you," she said.

He fetched a long breath.

"Then that's all right! The rest is simple. We'll have to be married at once and get away to-night. There's a boat to-morrow from Montreal to Liverpool. It's the longest way around, but under the circumstances——"

"Why do you want to marry me?" she interrupted him passionately. "Me! a nobody, a stenographer that—you've transacted business with. Is it"—her voice trembled—"is it because you're sorry for me?"



A CURIOUS expression came into Savidge's eyes. He was silent for a moment; then he smiled at her with a sudden lighting up of his face. Taking her small hand he held it gently and stood looking down at it as it lay in his palm.

"Maybe," he said. "We can call it that if you like. But maybe it's because I need you. It wouldn't be fair if I didn't tell you both sides. I can give you what you want most—a chance to see the whole wide world and see it right. I'm not what they call

rich down on Wall Street; but I guess most everything you'll want you can have.

"But sometimes there'll be hardships and sometimes danger. I've seen cholera at Bokhara and smallpox at Samarkand—those romantic places you dream about! And I've dodged spies until it's become second nature. Twice there's been a price on my head; and there's not a Court in southern Europe that won't celebrate when I cash in! But it's a great Game, this skirmishing ahead of the railroad; and the woman that plays it with me will taste Life, by gad! Judy, there's just one woman in the world that can play the Game with me. I've known you were that woman since the first time we talked together. You'll make a good comrade, and you'll always play the Game!"

"How do you know?" she whispered.

"From your eyes. From the way your face lights when you see a story. From the way you look at men. From the things you don't do. From your hands, from your laugh—and from the way you take an order."

"I might betray you."

"You never will."

She leaned forward and looked at him with a touch of something that was akin to awe in her expression.

"What sort of man are you? Do you mean to say you can trust me like that?"

"But aren't you trusting me even more, Judy? No, let's be done with that word trust. I know you, and I know myself. I believe I can make you happy and keep you safe. There's nothing more to be said about it, is there?"

She met his eyes squarely, her face reddening.

"But there is something more to be said. I don't—I don't love you. I should be taking more than I gave. It isn't fair. You offer me the world and I take it just because I—because I want to live and see things and write my stories. Is that the way a woman should feel when she marries a man?"

He gave the hand he held a little pat and released it.

"I'm not worrying about that, Judy. If you like it better that way, we'll be comrades. Call it a partnership in adventure. There's many a marriage made on a less honest basis than that. I'm not worrying, because I"—a serene smile flitted across his face—"because I know more about human nature than you do!"



JUDY walked over and stood looking down with unseeing eyes at the floor of the rotunda. She had a curious light-headed feeling of excitement, of terror and of sheer, unbelievable happiness. She had dreamed many dreams; but she had had nothing like this vision of the great highways of the world that suddenly opened out to her. She saw them stretching away before her, through a shimmering haze, straight to the goal of her heart's desire.

Never again need she know the blank gray days when visions would not come; never again the fear of losing them altogether; never again the pinch of poverty. With the highways of the world spread at her feet it was as if a door to inexhaustible treasure had opened to her.

"Oh, the stories I could write!" she whispered, and instinctively her fingers felt for the pencil in her hair.

Then with a sudden start of dismay she bumped up against the practical reality of things. She turned toward Savidge entreatingly.

"I must think. To-morrow—" she began.

His face turned grim. He drew her toward the edge of the mezzanine balcony and nodded in the direction of a writing-room that opened off the rotunda. The man she had seen on the stairway sat reading just inside this door, the light from a shaded lamp bringing out the olive-tinted pallor of his face.

"That's Wolkonsky," he said. "I've never seen him in the light before; but I know it's the chief just as I know you're you. You remember what I said about him in the letter to West?"

"The biggest man in the Russian Secret Service," she repeated.

"Exactly. Well, he's the reason why to-morrow won't do. I leave for Montreal to-night. The Game begins. Do you want to play it with me?"

For a breathless minute she stood looking at him with wide-open eyes, the pupils black, the irises flecked with fire. Then suddenly she made a sound in her throat that was half a sob and half a trill of laughter:

"Oh, it's absurd. It's—it's crazy! People don't do things like that——"

"Not ordinary people. But you will."

She stood still in the middle of the bronze cage. In her throat a pulse was beating as

if it would choke her. She felt a sudden nausea with the stifling, stunting life in which she had fought for breath, in which she would fight for years to come. She put out her hand and touched his arm with her finger-tips.

"I'm coming with you!" she whispered.

"Good little soldier!" he said, cheerfully ignoring the white nervousness of her face. "All we have to do now is to be married. Then you can go around to your boarding-house and get what you need. There's a train at eleven-something. Come on, comrade!"

But she hung back, her face no longer pale, but rosily embarrassed.

"But how—one has to have a—license, or something, doesn't one?"

He looked down at her with the expression she was to see very often in the days to come—humorous, whimsical, with a touch of something she could not then see—a deep and protecting tenderness.

"My dear Judy, one does!" he said gravely. "Do you see that young man lingering down there near the news-stand? That's the registrar's clerk. He has the license in his pocket, ready for you to sign. I arranged all that this morning."

CHAPTER VI

AN OUTPOST OF CIVILIZATION

THROUGH the principal passage of the bazaars of Tiflis, on an afternoon a month later, the stream of bazaar frequenters was swept before the reckless wheels of a Russian troika. It was drawn by three horses abreast and occupied by a bejeweled personage who regarded the scurrying pedestrians with an indolent condescension. Ahead of the carriage ran a huge black *farash*, brandishing a steel mace as a drum-major wields a baton, urging before him the pushing, crawling crowd and raising his cry of:

"*Khabadar! Khabadar*—make way! make way!"

Before him buyers and sellers, pilgrims and merchants from many lands, money-changers and a rabble of filthy, clamoring beggars, gave way, while donkeys and pack-mules jostled the fleeing crowd. Intoxicated with his brief moment of power, the big bully charged the crowd, laying about him with his mace and roaring exuberantly.

Thus he had reached the center of the bazaars and the booth of a silversmith from Byzantium, when over the heads of the throng he caught sight of a man's hat, conspicuously the hat of a European. With a shout of "*Farangi!*" (foreigner) he bounded toward the hat, grinning with delight, clearing his master's path with fresh enthusiasm.

For half an hour, Mr. and Mrs. John Savidge had been lingering in front of the silversmith's booth, Judy watching with fascinated eyes a miracle of craftsmanship that flowered under the silversmith's incredible hands—and Savidge watching Judy.

At the moment when the zealous footman came in sight of them, Savidge stepped inside the booth to examine a shirt of mail that hung against the brick wall. In the general din of the bazaar, Judy had not noticed the increased clamor until the brazen voice of the *farash* smote her ears. She looked up with a start. An Armenian money-changer, who had been haggling at her elbow, whirled and swept her out into the passageway. At her back was a pack-mule and its frantic driver, while in front of her the *farash* bawled:

"*Zud! Zud! Tez! Tez!*" (Quick! hurry up!)

From side to side he swung his mace, grinning evilly as he advanced upon her. She had a glimpse behind him of the three horses abreast, of the crowd shrinking and scrambling away from the wheels of the troika, with barely room to save their toes, and, in front of the silversmith's booth, of Savidge turning sharply to look for her. She tried to slip back to where he stood, but the *farash* suddenly swirled his mace above her head and jostled her roughly against the wall.

He had on his tongue the beginning of a peculiarly Oriental observation on the standing of unveiled women, when Savidge's arm shot out and his fist landed on the side of the black jaw. With a droll expression of astonishment the lackey went sprawling to the ground. Savidge pushed Judy back into the silversmith's booth just as the troika rumbled down upon them. The bejeweled man in the carriage half rose and his hand sought the gold hilt of a heavy-bladed *kinjal*. Then his glance took in Savidge and he bowed with grave Oriental courtesy.

"Peace be unto you," he said.

"Peace be with you, Meshadi," returned Savidge with equal gravity. And the troika rolled on.

Judy looked from her husband to the heavy back of the man in the troika.

"He knew you," she said. "I could tell that by his eyes."

Savidge nodded.

"We've met before—on official business. And if I know the East we'll meet again on official business. That was the Khadkhuda, the chief magistrate and the biggest scoundrel unchanged in Tiflis."

Judy looked up at his face, which had grown suddenly stern, and a shadow passed over her own. His quick eyes saw it at once. He slipped his hand under her arm and drew her over to the silversmith's bench.

"Don't you bother your head, Judy. See, which of these bracelets do you choose?"

 WITH a long sigh of satisfaction she turned to the old Byzantine craftsman, who had continued placidly turning and twisting his silver filaments into fairylike designs. And behind her the many-hued tide swept again through the mazes of the bazaar. She had not been two days in Tiflis and already the bazaars had caught her in their spell. She moved as one in a dream through the mysterious half-twilight of the great roofed rabbit-warren, drinking in the sights and sounds around her.

It seemed to her the most seductive buying place in the world, these acres of bazaars where buyers and sellers haggled in the four score dialects of Asia over carpets from Kurdistan, shawls of price from Cashmere, dazzling broideries from Shiraz, tiger-skins from Mazandaran, turquoises from the mines of Nishapur, and pearls from the Persian Gulf; where merchants chaffered over cotton prints from Moscow and Manchester, and silken stuffs from Samarkand; where tourists bartered for wavy swords and daggers from Daghestan, for coats of mail inlaid with precious metals, for coffeeseats in silver filigree and Persian jugs wrought in yellow gold.

Along these clamorous passageways, camel-drivers, bronzed and bearded, piloted their lumbering desert craft; muleteers in baggy trousers and sheepskin shirts shrieked

at their wag-eared charges, lashed them under the belly and pummeled them through the maze of commerce. And over everything was the smell Judy was never to forget—the smell of the scraggly-coated camels, the reek of *latakia*, the fumes of spices and burning sandalwood, the scent of musk and bergamot, the stench of narrow enclosed passageways and dung-befouled caravan courts—all mingling in the unforgettable and indescribable odor of the East.

It was as if she had rubbed the Magic Lamp and accommodating slaves had transported her from the bronze cage in the mezzanine balcony straight to the Land of Enchantment. The shadowy arcades were peopled with wavering shapes—calenders and viziers perhaps, or ghouls and genies for aught she knew; and she would not have been surprised if at any moment the lordly-bearded Harun-al-Raschid himself had stepped out to bid her a royal welcome to the East.

"I'm sure I'll wake up in Brooklyn," she said; "and if I do I shall die of disappointment!"

Savidge fended off with his elbow a man-gy pack-mule that was unconcernedly crowding Judy to the wall.

"I've known tourists that talked about the romance of the East at home and then took the next steamer back when they smelled the Orient. You don't mind the bad smells or the dirt, do you, Judy?"

She looked up at him with laughter in her eyes.

"Honestly, I've never been so happy in my life!"

A deep look of contentment came into Savidge's face. But he merely said,

"Come along with me if you want to see an Oriental delicatessen shop."

 IN AN arched recess at the end of a passageway stood a *dastarkhan* twinkling with tapers. The long table was heaped with Oriental kickshaws, cream-tarts and confections compounded of almonds, pistachios and citrous fruits; earthen pots brimmed with carrots chopped in honey; rice-balls stuccoed with raisins and spices, which the natives dexterously pop into the mouth; shaved ice smothered in sirups; bricks of fragrant tea—the *Chai* of Central Asia and the *Lonka* of the Far East—ready to be crumbled into tall glass-

es and covered with water from the samovars.

High up under the vaulted roof of the bazaars the dun-gray shadows were gathering; on every hand the smoky gloom deepened; and in front of them the tapers made golden points of light in a mysterious blue twilight. The face of the vender of goodies shone like a moon of old ivory as he snuffed a taper and then went into eclipse among the shadows of the booth. Judy's eyes gleamed whimsically as she turned to Savidge.

"Do you believe in Fairy-land?" she asked him.

He regarded her gravely.

"Sure! Knew a fellow once that had been there."

"And you never told me!"

"Oh, you see, it happened ever so long ago—thousands of years ago, in fact. He was a King of Babylon, or some other outlandish place. For a good many years his Majesty had dreamed of a princess; but as year followed year and he did not find her, he began to think of the quest as hopeless. Then one night, by chance, he wandered into Fairy-land——"

"Was she really very beautiful?" asked Judy.

Oddly enough her face had fallen.

Savidge nodded.

"He thought so that night when she tucked her hand under his arm and they walked down the Main Street of Fairy-land.

And afterward as they sat under the fairy lights and he looked across the table into her eyes he knew that at last the right princess had been found." The shadow of a smile flickered across the serious face. "Oh, yes, they have restaurants in Fairy-land where they serve the most wonderful *filet mignon* and the divinest Nesselrode puddings!"

A swift confusion appeared in Judy's manner. But she said,

"I don't think much of that sort of Fairy-land—where beautiful princesses stuff themselves with beef and pudding!"

Her voice betrayed nothing of the feeling that had made her eyes light up, and Savidge turned away, the boyish expression fading from his face.

"We had better get back to the hotel," he said. "I expect Hassan will bring around some horses for me to look over."

Tiflis is a city of the blithest piquancy in the matter of contrasts. The street they followed began in the evil-smelling mazes of an Asiatic town and ended in the Hotel de Londres, modern and luxurious, the last of its kind on the edge of a country of weird food and unspeakable caravansaries. From the window of a bedroom as modern in its appointments as any in a New York hotel, Judy could see the snowy peaks of the Caucasus and the faint curve of a caravan trail that had been in use a thousand years.

TO BE CONTINUED.





The Payment of Quinn's Debt by Talbot Mundy

POACHING and the relics of the feudal system are inextricably mixed up, and neither institution seems really moribund. In fact there are more poachers than there ever were, because there are more pheasants. But taking what belongs to other people is numbered nowadays among the finer arts, and artists need to specialize.

So poor old Andy Quinn had all the chances against him when he broke into Squire Norwood's game preserves. Being an honest man by instinct and training, and too nervous to use his mother wit, he was caught at the very first attempt—caught red-handed too, with four fine cock-pheasants on his person.

Now, poaching is a serious crime; a man can get six months for it. And Wilfred Norwood was a squire of the old-time type that hates a poacher far more fiercely than even a political opponent; it would have gone ill with Andy Quinn but for that six-foot son of his.

He went to the Squire, and squared his great broad shoulders and put it to him as man to man: he asked the Squire what he himself would do if he were out of work, and starving, and no work was to be had, and he would not beg, and pheasants were to be had merely for the wringing of their necks; and the Squire saw reason. He investigated before proceeding with the case.

And he discovered that the Quinns were decent folk—strangers to the County, for it takes several generations to become recognized in that part of England, and the

Quinns had left Ireland only seventy years ago; the present generation had been born in London. Quinn, Senior, bore the reputation of an honest man; and the younger Quinn carried conviction on his great broad, honest face and in the set of his shoulders and the hollow of his back and his blunt, straight, unequivocating speech.

The Squire found a job on his estate for Andy Quinn, and wrote to the Colonel of his own old regiment, recommending the son as a likely looking soldier. So within a month of Andy's first adventure into crime he found himself living in a cottage on the Squire's estate, and his son had the Queen's shilling in his pocket and was grinding the gravel of a barrack square in elephantine efforts to learn the goose-step.

The Quinns—and there were a Mother Quinn and nine little ones, besides Terence and his father—were grateful; for the difference between a six months' fast while the breadwinner breaks stones in jail and a good job on a well-cared-for estate is nearly as great as that between hell and heaven; and, being Irish, they could feel emotion.

But the gratefullest of all of them was Terence. He joined the army with a grim resolution fixed immovably at the back of his slowly moving brain; and though he told no one of it, not his father even, he never lost sight of it from the day he joined. He considered that he owed the Squire a debt, and he meant to pay it!

How he would pay it, or when, or where, were things he did not consider yet, and the lack of immediate opportunity did not

disturb him in the least. He was a strong man, with a wealth of patience in him, and he could wait and bide his time.

 FOR the present he held his tongue and tramped the barrack square and accepted with a good-natured grin the abuse the sergeants gave him. They discovered that he remembered what he had once learned, and that from day-break until drill was over for the day he tried his utmost; he had none of the usual recruits' tricks of answering back, and from first to last he never once complained. So the abuse and ridicule ceased after a while, and in the end he passed through his recruit course without having made a single enemy.

He was never up before the Colonel, and he had no idea at all that his letter from Squire Norwood had done anything more for him than get him into a decent regiment; but the Colonel had been watching him, and when Quinn had been in the army about a year he was thunderstruck one day to find himself promoted to lance-corporal!

He applied then for a week's leave, and went back home to Lincolnshire. Squire Norwood welcomed him and made him feel as though he were a family retainer, and one to be proud of; and the sight of his parents spending their old age in comfort in a decent cottage brought a lump into his throat and sent the blood racing a little faster through his veins. He said nothing, though; but he went back to his regiment again with that determination he had made more real and grim than ever.

The spirit of the regiment had crept into his veins by this time, and quick promotion had helped to fix it there; he began to see the bright side of a soldier's life, and the prospects that a man has who behaves himself. He drilled well and worked hard and never grumbled; he saved more than half his pay, and kept clear of the canteen, and because his eye was clear and his hand was steady and taking trouble was instinctive with him, he became a marksman; so he was made a full corporal almost before he knew it.

Then he took another trip to Lincolnshire; and the Squire made much of him, and teased him about his stripes, and made him feel as though the whole of Lincolnshire were interested in his welfare. It was Winter-time, and the Squire's son was home

from Sandhurst; Terence Quinn was pressed into service as a gun-bearer for him, and on one occasion went with him to the County town to act as servant.

In the cold gray hours of the morning following, young Norwood was carried home, blind, paralytic drunk, and put to bed by corporal Quinn; but Quinn said nothing. And he went back once more to his regiment with that sense of indebtedness to the Squire even more firmly fixed than ever.

But he still saw no way of wiping out the debt, and it was not until good conduct and efficiency had raised him to the rank of sergeant that what looked like the beginning of an opportunity began to show itself. Young Norwood passed through Sandhurst, and in the natural course of things was gazetted as a second lieutenant to his father's old regiment.

He came with family tradition and good looks and good-will and influence to back him up; he was received for his father's sake with open arms, and the new world that was opening up in front of him was made easy for him in every way. For the first two weeks he bathed in a sun-bath of hospitality, and but for a casual recognition one morning in the barrack square he never thought of Quinn. But Quinn did some hard thinking.

Quinn had designs on the sergeant-majorship by that time, for ambition had come as the spirit of the regiment seeped into his veins and became a part of him; and the knowledge that his quick promotion had placed him in a line for it strengthened his ambition. But now he almost wished himself back again a private so that he might become young Norwood's servant. There was even a wild moment when he seriously considered the commission of some regimental crime that would bring about his reduction to the ranks; but that madness passed quickly.

He contented himself by asking for his transfer to young Norwood's half-company, and, since that was almost the first favor he had asked for since he joined, it was granted promptly. Then he settled down to bide his time and watch.



IT TOOK very little watching on the part of Quinn to discover what was wrong; he knew it first, but the knowledge was common property in the

regiment before a month was out. Norwood was a fine-looking young fellow, with a fine idea of himself, and neither of those things is a crime in a soldier's eyes; but he seemed to lack all sense of responsibility, and as responsibility is the very essence of an officer's position, his prospect of following in his father's footsteps began to grow fainter and ever fainter as the weeks wore by.

Soldiers are as quick as children—almost—to discover weak points in the armor of those in authority, and Norwood's half-company happened to be mostly four or five year men; and the older a soldier is, the more easily he draws distinctions between officers.

Quinn was able to work wonders; but the fact remained that Norwood's half-company grew slack and its drill became anemic. The Squire's son seemed to lack interest, and either could not learn to drill men or else would not take the trouble; the social side of a soldier's life appealed to him, but its duties bored him.

Soon things grew worse. The Colonel had a talk to Norwood, and in picked words, that spared his feelings nothing, he reminded him that this was his father's old regiment and that in addition to the duty incumbent on him to make the most of his profession there was the painful fact that his retirement would cause much woe in Lincolnshire; he told him in so many words to pull himself together and get a grip on things unless he wished to leave the army.

Norwood had sense enough to understand; but he had not sense enough to shorten his daily, or rather nightly, round of gaiety; he tried, instead, to burn the candle even harder at both ends, and in order to get himself into something like condition for six-o'clock parade he took to drinking brandy. And so the end came.

It happened on parade, three weeks after the Colonel's lecture, and during the simplest possible maneuver. Norwood was the worse for drink, and fagged out after a night's debauchery; Quinn tipped him the right word of command in a raucous whisper, but Norwood either failed to hear it or else ignored it, and his half-company performed an evolution that is not described in drill-books. The Colonel rode his charger up to where the little red-clad mob of men was milling in seemingly inextricable confusion, and gave vent at last to the dis-

gust that had been boiling in his brain for weeks past.

His words became regimental history, and they are still quoted with glee to the men of other regiments who happen to be fools enough to think that their Colonels can apostrophize. Norwood should have realized the honor that was done him in being made the recipient of such marvelous abuse, but the drink and the debauchery had worked their way with him, and he then and there damned himself forever so far as that particular regiment was concerned. He committed three distinct and separate crimes, any one of which in itself was cardinal: He omitted to salute. He answered back. And right out in the open on parade he excused himself and blamed the thing on Quinn!

A brother officer disentangled the half-company and kept command of it until the exercise was over; and Norwood received leave of absence before he had time even to get out of uniform. That day his father was written to, politely but very firmly, and requested to make some more suitable arrangement for his son's career, and then the regiment went on about its business and Norwood became an incident in its history instead of part of it. He was left to himself to pack up his belongings and steep in his own shame and go his way alone and unregretted.

 QUINN knew then that his time had come to pay the debt; he said nothing to any one, and he did not in the least understand yet what was to be the manner of the payment; but deep down in the great man's heart of him was a quickening thrill which told him that the time had come. Nothing had been done officially as yet, for regiments observe the decencies in burying their dead, and Norwood's delinquency did not call for public disgrace; he would be allowed to send in his resignation after a decent interval. But officers have servants, and the servants talk, so Quinn had not the slightest difficulty in finding out that Norwood was to leave the regiment.

He spent a long afternoon in walking, walking, walking through the streets, quickly but aimlessly, for his slowly moving brain worked better that way; then he returned to barracks and talked to the sergeant-major, asking more questions than he had

ever asked in all his life, and calling down on himself a flood of good-natured, half-contemptuous ridicule.

But he knew what he was after, and he stuck to it; and when the sergeant-major's stock of information was exhausted, and he had satisfied himself that every single part of it was quite correct, he marched off to young Norwood's quarters. And the blow that he struck on the oaken door to gain admittance was his first blow in the long-awaited struggle to pay his debt.

Young Norwood's soldier-servant was loafing in the corridor outside.

"You can't go in!" he told him. "Strict orders!"

"Out o' this!" said Quinn.

"But——"

"Get out o' this, d'y'e hear?"

The servant slunk away, and Quinn knocked on the door again.

"Who's that?" said a voice inside—a melancholy voice, half defiant and half choked by misery.

Quinn opened the door and entered, closing it again carefully behind him. Norwood looked up and scowled; a link with his home-county, even such a faint one as Quinn, was the last thing that he wanted at that moment; it was his thoughts of home that made him wretched.

"Who gave you leave to open the door?" he demanded.

"I thought you said 'Come in,' sir."

"Well, I did nothing of the kind. You can go out again!"

Quinn coughed.

"Begging your pardon, sir——"

"Go! I said."

Quinn stood like a statue, and waited in patience until Norwood looked up again.

"I said Go! Didn't you hear me?"

"Yes, sir; I heard. But I've something I want to say, sir."

"I've enough troubles of my own just at this minute; I've no time to listen to other people's!"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but it's no trouble of mine I came to talk about. You're not done yet, sir; you've a chance! There's a way out!"

Norwood looked puzzled, struggling apparently between snobbishness that forbade him to accept the proffered friendship of an inferior, utter hopelessness, and curiosity. Curiosity won in the end.

"A way out of what?" he demanded.

"Out of resignation, sir."

"What the devil has my business got to do with you?"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but more'n you think. There's more'n just you going to break their hearts over this business. But there's only you as can mend matters. I know the way, that's all."

"It didn't occur to you, I suppose, to wait until you were asked?"

"No, sir, it didn't. It seemed to me I could help you for your father's sake, and I just came and did it. Try the West Coast, sir—West Coast of Africa—there's black regiments out there—niggers wi' white officers—lots of active service, and nothing to do but 'tend to soldiering. Get seconded to one o' them regiments, sir. Stick to the service—you're not done yet!"



STRANGELY enough, in the black depths of his despair, and with the prospect of his father's grief to face, it had never occurred to young Norwood that he might still remain a soldier; the practical part of the profession had been so foreign to him from the outset, and he had taken so little interest in it that, beyond knowing that West Coast regiments did exist, he had never given them a thought.

He jumped now at the thought of them; his ambition was all dead within him, but the West Coast was a splendid place to which to go away and hide, and he thought that if his name still remained in the Army List his father's grief would be probably less acute. Besides, the West Coast climate is notorious; he might die there; and in his then frame of mind, death seemed the one thing worth while.

"Try the West Coast, sir!" repeated Quinn, watching the changing expressions that swept one after another over Norwood's face. "They tell me the pay's more'n double out there, sir. You wouldn't have to ask your father for a penny, sir; you could go out, and do it on your own. You're sure to see active service, and you'd have a real chance to show 'em what you're made of! Have another try, sir! Your father—he'd——"

Norwood rose suddenly, passion depicted on his face now—the petulant passion of a half-developed boy.

"Look here! This is nothing short of——insolence! You know perfectly well that I'm not in a position to have you pun-

ished for insubordination as you deserve, and you're trying to take advantage. I'll trouble you not to mention my father! Just because he plucked you and your family out of the gutter and saved the whole bunch of you from jail, where you ought to have gone, every one of you, is no reason why you should dare come and preach to me. Being saved from jail doesn't make you regimental chaplain! Get out of here! Go on! Right about, turn! Quick, march! And shut the door behind you!"

So Quinn went out again, despondent and crushed and thinking he had failed to grasp his opportunity; and Norwood had his belongings removed to a neighboring hotel, and shut himself in his room there and refused to answer even his father's letters. But three weeks later there appeared in the *Gazette* a notice to the effect that Evelyn Jolliffe Norwood, second lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards, had been appointed to a lieutenancy in the Lagos Light Infantry; and two days after the appearance of the notice young Norwood left for Lagos on a Coast-bound steamer, never even thinking of Sergeant Quinn or troubling to say good-by to him.

 AND on the very day that the *Gazette* came out with Norwood's appointment in it, Quinn saluted his Colonel and asked to speak to him.

"I'd like leave, sir, to apply for the post of sergeant-instructor to the Lagos Light Infantry."

"But why?" asked the Colonel in amazement.

"I'd like the extra money, sir," lied Quinn. He lied unhandily, and the Colonel noticed it.

"Um-m-m! There's something else at the back of this. What's the trouble, Quinn?"

"No trouble, sir."

"Well, why leave the regiment, then? I don't care to let my sergeants go off to the West Coast; they get out of touch with the regiment. When I've got a good man, I like to keep him. I'll have to think this over."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Quinn, "but my record's clean, and I've passed in musketry. Haven't I the right to apply?"

"You're a fool if you apply! It's a rotten climate on the West Coast of Africa—there's none worse anywhere. What's the matter with the regiment? I don't see that

you've any reason to be discontented."

"I'm not discontented, sir. But, begging your pardon, sir, I took a fancy to go to the West Coast, and I'd like to put in my application as strong as I can."

"Well," said the Colonel, "there's no fool like a — fool! Is there a vacancy out there?" He took up a file of printed notices and studied one of them. "Yes. I see there is—applications should be in by the end of this week. Very well, I'll send yours in, and recommend you; but I'm sorry to lose you, Quinn."

"Thank you, sir. I'm sorry to leave the regiment in more ways than one."

The Colonel raised his eyebrows and studied Quinn inquiringly for a few seconds; he decided not to question any further though, for Quinn's ability to keep his own counsel had become proverbial, and there is little to be gained from cross-examining a man like that.

"Very well," he said, nodding.

And Quinn saluted and fell away.

Seven weeks later, Sergeant Terence Quinn—six feet one of him—was spewed up on the steamy beach at Lagos from the spume of an upturned surf-boat, and half of Lagos, both black and white, gathered round to stare at him. Quinn stared back, and gathered his belongings, which were scattered all around him on the beach; then he marched up to where the British flag flopped lazily from a whitewashed pole, saluted his new commanding officer, and reported for duty without having said a word to any one.

II

 OF COURSE the unexpected happened. Quinn discovered that Lieutenant Norwood was not in Lagos; he had been sent directly after his arrival to a place called Lobo, and was in charge of the station there. Quinn's duties, on the other hand, kept him for a while in Lagos, where there were fifty or sixty new recruits to be licked into shape, and the doing of it was likely to keep him busy for several months.

So he called on that inexhaustible fund of patience of his and settled down to routine work. Since he joined the army he had made a great discovery: he had found out that the man who pleases his superiors by consistent, uncomplaining attention to his

duty can get almost anything he wants in reason; he wanted to get to Lobo, so he began at once to earn his commanding officer's unqualified approval before putting in his application.

He was totally devoid of theories; to his mind there were no two ways of doing things, and the right and only way was that laid down in the Regulations; so he proceeded to rub the Regulations into the unwilling systems of fifty-five recruits. They took to him from the start, for his size and build appealed to them, and he looked good-natured; he never lost his temper with them, and he scarcely ever reported them; he simply wore the roughness off them, and put the polish on, by persistent patience. And in his spare time he kept his ears open.

He would not have been Terence Quinn if he had asked questions, especially questions about any of his superiors; and even after he had been three months there, there was not a soul in Lagos except himself who knew the reason for his coming there. But all Coast towns are gossipy, and news filters in from the hinterland as surely as the rivers do; a man need only listen, and he will learn all that there is to know, besides a heap of things that ought to be forgotten.

News of Norwood reached him within ten days. Men who had passed through Lobo spoke of him with shrugged shoulders, and even in that country which is little better than a graveyard of shattered hopes, he seemed to be considered a particularly hopeless case. Some said that he was drinking secretly; if that were true, of course he would not have much more than a year to live, for constant sipping on the quiet is the stanchest ally that equatorial climates have.

Quinn knew enough to know that, and he worked at his recruits with redoubled energy and even more amazing patience. He was possessed now by one idea—to get to Norwood, and since, according to his creed, the only way to do things was the right way, and the right way for him was to make machines of natives, he settled down and made them.

They came along amazingly; one morning his commanding officer came down to look them over, and instead of returning to his quarters in high dudgeon, as he had expected to, he saw them perform company

evolutions nearly as well as white troops could have done it.

"Quinn," he said, "you'll have to take these men up-country; their quarters here are pretty badly needed to house the company that's coming down next week. You can start for Lobo on Monday morning, and put the finishing touches on them there."

"Thank you, sir," said Quinn.

"You've little to thank me for! Lobo is the worst station we have. You won't be kept there very long—in fact, I'm trying to get the station abolished altogether, but for the present we have to keep a hundred men there. See the Medical Officer before you go, and mind you follow out his instructions to the letter while you're there; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure in this country. By the way, aren't you in the Coldstreams? You'll find an officer of your regiment up there—Lieutenant Norwood."

"I'm glad to hear that, sir," said Quinn. "He's a fine officer, and he and I come from the same village in Lincolnshire; my father's employed on his father's estate."

"Ah! You'll get along well with him, then."

"I'm sure of that, sir."

Quinn saluted, and took his contingent back to the lines; and the commanding officer stared after him and wondered.

"Now, that's a fine man," he was thinking, "and he's a silent man; he had no need to praise young Norwood. And Norwood's as obvious a rotter as I ever set eyes on! I wonder what's behind it. Sure he'll get on well with him, is he? Well, I'm not so sure!"

Quinn was not so sure either. He had a very distinct notion that he was about to face the most difficult situation of his career, and on the long march to Lobo, as he trudged with his men through mosquito-infested forests and around the edge of steamy, fever-full swamps and amid pest-laden undergrowth, he experienced his first sensation of worry.

He knew quite well how to stop an enlisted man from drinking, and how to make him face the music; but it was another matter with an officer. But he never for one single second gave up the idea of winning, nor regretted having started out to try; he owed a lifelong debt to old Squire Norwood, and he meant to pay or perish.



SO IT was a stalwart-looking and determined Quinn that led five-and-fifty natives into Lobo and halted them before the British flag and made them stand at attention to wait for Norwood. They waited ten minutes, and no one came. Then Quinn walked toward the officer's quarters—a mud-walled, grass-roofed hut—clean, but quite unpretentious. He knocked, and there was no answer; so he entered. He found young Norwood asleep, sprawling in a long-armed chair, with a half-emptied bottle of whisky beside him; he was untidy and unshaven, and the hollows underneath his eyes were blue, either from drink or fever—possibly from both.

Quinn coughed, but there was no answer. He seized a chair and raised it and dropped it on the floor; but there was still no answer. So he took hold of Norwood's shoulder and shook him, and the moment he awoke he stepped back and saluted.

"Sergeant-instructor, arrived with details, sir, from Lagos. All present and correct."

"Oh, all right, sergeant. Stow 'em in the lines somewhere—you'll find plenty of empty huts. Take a decent hut for yourself. Come round here afterward and have a drink."

"Begging your pardon, sir——"

There was something in the voice that Norwood recognized, and he looked at Quinn more keenly.

"You!" he said, sitting upright.

"My respects, sir!" said Quinn, saluting, and grinning a little sheepishly.

"D'you mean you've followed me out here? Can't I get away and hide anywhere without being dogged by yokels from my father's estate?"

Quinn answered nothing; he stood at attention, with features like a mask, and waited.

"I'll see that you're transferred at once! Meanwhile, get out of here!"

Quinn saluted again, very precisely this time.

"Under favor, sir, the details are waiting to be inspected."

"House 'em in the lines. Assign four men to a hut."

"Beg pardon, sir, but if you won't inspect 'em, I'll march 'em back again to Lagos!"

"—— your impudence!" spluttered Nor-

wood, rising out of the chair and facing Quinn. His eyes were bloodshot, and he looked half beside himself with drink and misery.

Quinn stood motionless.

"Take your men and assign huts to them, d'you hear?"

"I hear, sir," said Quinn; but he stood where he was, without moving.

"Then do it!"

"Not till you've inspected 'em, sir!"

Then the drink and the climate and the misery combined took hold of Norwood, and for the moment he was mad. His fist clenched and his eye blazed, and he looked wildly round the room as though seeking to escape from devils that threatened him.

"Get out of here, you swine!" he snarled through clenched teeth. Then weakness seized him and he was almost tearful. "I won't inspect 'em! I tell you I won't have my sleep disturbed like this! Take 'em away, d'you hear? As if it wasn't bad enough——"

He stopped, for rage was choking him again. Quinn still stood motionless in front of him.

"Go!" he ordered, for one syllable was all that he could compass.

His eyes narrowed and his fist drew back slowly, and suddenly he did the worst and meanest thing that an officer can ever do. Quinn reeled backward from a blow that caught him full on his unprotected face and brought the blood streaming from his upper lip.

"Now, God be praised!" said Quinn, "I've got you now! You'll do what I say, and quit drinking, and learn to be an officer and a gentleman, or I'll have you placed under arrest for this and jailed in Lagos. Choose which you prefer!"

But Norwood had fallen back into the chair again, and was leaning forward with his head between his hands, sobbing like a child.

III



WHAT happened in Lobo after that was as a sealed book—a mystery that no one ever succeeded in unveiling. Before the men, Quinn was respectfulness itself, and there was not a black man in the whole contingent but believed that Norwood, in breeding and courage and understanding, was Quinn's superior; Quinn

gave them to understand as much. Quinn they knew; he had drilled the greater part of them, and had rubbed their unregenerate black noses into the trough of fixed routine; they knew him for a better man than they were, and respected him because they had to. And if he chose to respect his officer, that was reason enough for them; they copied him.

But behind the scenes strange things must have happened. A black sergeant told, a year afterward in Lagos, of how Quinn had made him carry three cases of whisky from Lieutenant Norwood's godown, and had opened the cases in the jungle behind the lines, and had smashed each bottle and had poured the contents on the ground; but he never knew the reason. The waste of all that liquor had appalled the black man, and that was how he came to remember the incident for so long afterward; he never connected it with Quinn's arrival, or supposed even that Quinn had done it on his own responsibility.

There was nothing else to go upon, and no other incident transpired to throw a light on what Quinn did. Quinn spent long hours alone with Lieutenant Norwood, but all that the natives saw was an officer recovering from what they thought was fever, and that was nothing new. What Quinn saw, or did, he held his tongue about; and Norwood saw nothing but the bogy of disgrace, from which there was no means of escape except by the up-hill route that Quinn pointed out for him; he was less likely even than Quinn to talk about it afterward. So the secret died with Quinn.

There were times when the men heard voices raised in anger; but that was nothing new; the climate of the West Coast makes most men petulant. And there were times when a white man was heard to cry aloud for drink; but they had heard that, too, often before. Out in the open and on parade Quinn never once forgot the outward forms of respect that are due from a non-commissioned officer; he even exaggerated them; and whatever the Commanding Officer might have guessed in the light of subsequent events, and whatever Quinn or Norwood knew, there was never any evidence to go on for presuming that the driving power behind Norwood's awakening was Quinn's.

He did awaken though. He began to appear more regularly on parade; and slowly

his voice regained its timbre, and his hand grew steady. And slowly, and by gradual degrees, he took hold of the company and drilled it, with the watchful, unrelaxing aid of Quinn, until it became a many-footed unit of which he was the brains.

And just as slowly, and by just as gradual degrees, so that the transformation was quite imperceptible to the men, Quinn made things over to him, letting go his hold and retiring farther and farther into the background as Norwood's grip strengthened; until at last the company was Norwood's, and Quinn was in his rightful place—instructor. He still kept watch and ward, but he began to leave initiative to the lieutenant and to spend his evenings by himself.



WHEN a Hausa tribe broke out in sudden red rebellion, and a runner came with orders for the company to march post-haste for the heart of it and join three other companies that were supposed to be beleaguered there, the change that Quinn had wrought in Norwood became obvious. The lieutenant had come into Lobo in a hammock, with a whisky-bottle suspended in a basketful of wet grass from the pole above him; but he marched out of it on his own two feet, at the head of his company; and he looked and marched and ordered like a man.

The black men swung along behind him with a rhythmic tramp that comes of nothing else but confidence; and behind them marched a giant of a man who meant to see to it that their confidence was not misplaced. He kept his distance nowadays; he had done the breaking-in and building-up; now for the test and the resurrection!

"Left!" he ordered; "Left—Left—Left! Less talking in the ranks there!"

And to Quinn the dust-cloud that rose behind them was like the distance of a thousand years that blotted out the past. Lord knows what it meant to Norwood! his work still lay ahead of him.

All Hell was loose in part of Hausaland, and the company got its fill of guerrilla fighting on the way. They had to hack their way through dense, dark jungle and wade, waist-deep, through swamps, and very little of their road was undisputed. But Quinn, always where he was wanted when the time came, urged on the men, and praised Norwood to them incessantly; he

made them look to Norwood to lead them, and rallied them around him when the camp was rushed, and so forced Norwood to shoulder the responsibility whether he wanted to or not.

And when there was in-fighting among the tangled undergrowth, or a river-crossing was disputed and a man might meet his death at the next step that he took, Quinn happened to be always somewhere close beside him with six of the stoutest men. Norwood's was the command and the responsibility, but Quinn saw to it that he did no fighting yet; he had made it his business to bring him out alive and honored, or, failing that, to see that he died in some way worthy of his name. So Sergeant-instructor Quinn kept both eyes lifting, and the six picked men worked hard.

Thanks to Quinn and his unceasing vigilance, they reached the tableland unharmed and fell in with the three companies they had been sent to find. In the center of the plain—less than a day's march from where the little column was—lay the headman's village, where three or four thousand of the rebel Hausas had elected to make a stand. The village was fenced around with stakes, and there was no cover on any side of it that might shield an attacking force.

If that village could be stormed and taken, the rebellion would probably be over—stamped out at the beginning. Three companies were too few, though, to undertake the task, and if the attack should fail, the whole of Hausaland was likely to blaze into rebellion. But with four companies the thing looked feasible, for four hundred men is fair odds against four thousand, if the four hundred are armed with rifles and led by white officers.

So the old campaigner who commanded welcomed Norwood and decided on the instant to advance and attack the village from all four sides at once. He had hardly exchanged greetings when he ordered Norwood to march with his company to the eastward and get beyond the village to the far side. His orders were to wait until each company was in position, and then to rush the place and burn it and blot it off the map. There was likely to be little quarter asked or given.

Quinn, as he marched off now behind the company, tingled in every inch of him. His life had been an uneventful one, and he was unused to stirring situations; ever since

he joined the army his one idea had been to square accounts with old Squire Norwood. It had grown into an obsession; and now that he seemed within reasonable distance of achievement the full force of his position seemed to dawn upon him suddenly.

He realized that he, a non-commissioned man—unauthorized and uninvited—was forcing a commissioned officer to find himself. For a moment, for the first time in his life, he even doubted whether what he did was right; and the great, strong fellow trembled as he saw the village and thought of what was coming.



BUT that phase passed with a stride or two, and when the company swung round and halted in position, just out of rifle-shot from the village, Quinn was his own phlegmatic, untemperamental self again. And his mind was made up; he was satisfied that he was right, and fully determined to go ahead; he waited, though, in his proper place behind the men, until Norwood called for him.

"I wish they'd hurry up!" said Norwood; "I hate this waiting! Why don't they signal, I wonder?"

"No need for a signal, sir; they're waiting for us to begin!"

"We were to wait here until the Major signaled from the far side."

"No, sir! We were to wait until the rest were in position, and then attack! They're in position now, sir—look!"

"How are we to know when they're ready?"

"No need, sir! We're ready! Come on now, sir! Here's your chance, all cut and dried and waiting for you! Fix bayonets—extend 'em to open order, and charge! It's the first real chance you've had! Quick and take it, sir! Get in that village before the rest have started, and wipe the eye of the whole bunch of them!"

Norwood looked at him for a moment with something like a return of his old indecision.

"It's against orders," he said hesitatingly.

"To — with orders, sir! Come on! This is one chance in a lifetime!"

"Compan—ee!" ordered Norwood, his mind made up at last and his voice ringing with the note of real authority, "Fix—bayonets! Form single—rank! To two paces—open order—extend! Forward—by the center!"

The men, with their rifles at the "slope," moved forward with a jerk to follow him, as though a weight had held them back and the word of command had released it; and Quinn, whose right place was behind, kept close beside him, watching him closely for the slightest sign of funk or indecision. He could see none.

"Double, sir!" he whispered, as the enemy opened fire through the gaps in their palisade, and the round Tower musket bullets began to whimper overhead.

"Double!" ordered Norwood, and the men behind him broke into a steady trot, gathering their coolness and *sang-froid* from the manner of the two white men who led them. There was not a sign of flinching, although the wildly aimed hail of bullets doubled with every step they took, and the howls of the defending Hausas gave them warning of what they might expect at closer quarters.

Norwood was plainly not afraid, and neither was Quinn, so why should they be? But as the company drew nearer, and the range grew less, the Hausa musket-men became more dangerous. Nothing had happened yet to disturb their aim, and their target was a big one, and an easy one to hit, since it was moving toward them in the open; bullets began to drop among the men, and one man fell.

"Halt, sir, and fire three volleys!" suggested Quinn.

"Halt!" roared Norwood, and he and Quinn slipped back between the ranks. Three volleys ripped through the palisade, and were answered by Hausa yells and screams of rage and agony. Then the hail of musketry began again, more wildly aimed and irregular, but still tremendous in its volume.

"Quick, sir!" said Quinn. "Forward now, before they've time to recover!"

But this time Norwood had not waited for the word. The spirit of the thing had taken hold of him, and he had drawn his sword and leaped forward between the ranks again. Quinn was not a second, though, behind him.

"Charge!" roared Norwood, pointing with his sword-point to the palisade; and the native bugler split the air with the ascending notes that have sent more good men to their death than any other thing in history.

It was a row of six-foot stakes that con-

fronted them—stakes eight inches thick, deep-set in the ground, and bound together with the toughest kind of bark-rope. It was defended by a yelling swarm of Hausas, who thrust their muskets through the gaps and blazed at them. There seemed no way round, or through, or over it; it looked like the spike-toothed jaws of death. But, led by their officers, the men charged up to it and thrust with their bayonets at the faces of the Hausas squinting down their musket-barrels on the other side. Then they knelt against the palisade and began to volley through it.

"This can't last!" said Quinn. "It's either forward or retire. Forward, I say!"

He seized Norwood by the waist, and swung him off his feet, kicking and swearing.

"Keep hold of your sword!" he growled; "you'll need it!"

Then he grabbed him below the knees and lifted him, and, straining every ounce of his tremendous strength, he flung him—straight over the palisade into the swarming, yelling, spear-armed mob that surged on the other side!

"Get in and win your spurs!" he growled.

Then he grabbed the two men nearest him, and knocked their woolly heads together to steady them, and climbed on to their shoulders and sprang in after Norwood to protect him. He landed feet-foremost in the *mêlée* almost before the Hausas had recovered from their astonishment, and he was fighting like a wild-cat before his feet touched earth.

"Forward, E Company!" he bellowed, as he took a spear-thrust on his locking-ring; "Forward, men! Forward!"

And the black soldiers he had drilled and taught and cared for stormed at the palisade and tore and hacked and wrenched at it, and clambered on one another's shoulders and leaped across it, while Quinn and Norwood held back the defenders and fought to clear a space where the men who leaped across could form. Then the palisade gave way before the weight against it and the hacking of the bayonets, and in a second the stakes were down and E Company was inside the village with a rush, fighting with butt and bayonet-point to reach their officer.

"Forward, sir!" said Quinn; "we're doing finely!"

"Forward! Charge, E Company!" bellowed Norwood, and once again the native

bugler ripped out the inspiring notes.

Then, step by step, with Quinn and Norwood always in the front of them—first one and then the other leading by a foot or so—the men of E Company cut and hacked and thrust their way toward the center of the village, leaving a blood-soaked swath behind them. On Norwood's left, Quinn's huge bulk guarded him, and his swinging, crashing rifle-butt that stove in a Hausa's skull at each descent helped clear a way for him; and on his right the six picked men that Quinn had chosen swept off the spear-thrusts with their locking-rings.

The charge proved irresistible, and the credit for the victory was Norwood's beyond a doubt, for when the other three companies had fought their way across the palisade, the village was in flames already, and the surviving defenders of it were on the run. There was little left for the other companies to do but round up prisoners.

But they had to bring a stretcher out for Quinn, for he was wounded; toward the finish of the fight he had put his leg in the way of a spear-thrust aimed at Norwood, and the end of it found him lying on the ground in agony. He grinned, though, as they placed him on the stretcher and he saw Norwood being complimented by his brother officers.

The debt was paid. And all the way to the Coast he grinned, in spite of the pain that racked him, and the jolting of the stretcher, and the flies, and the fever that took hold of him when the column reached

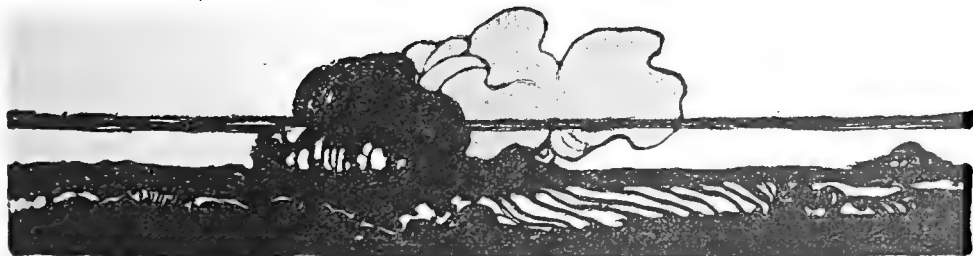
the low swamp-country as they neared the Coast.



HE AND Norwood went home again on the same ship, for Quinn's debt was paid in '87, and in that year contingents were drawn from all the British Colonies to represent the Empire in one tremendous, pompous, glittering Jubilee Parade. Half of E Company was chosen, under Norwood, and Quinn went with it as an invalid—finished with the West Coast—sent back to his regiment again, to drill recruits and sweat the fever from his bones as best he could.

He saw Squire Norwood; for the old man came to London to see his son lead the half-company of Lagos Light Infantry past the saluting point; the son had the silver cross of the Distinguished Service Order glittering on his breast, and Quinn, who was standing in the crowd, wore nothing but a General Service Medal; but he saw the old man's back stiffen as he watched his son, and the proudest man in England at that minute was Terence Quinn. He had lost a sergeant-majorship, maybe, but he had repaid a favor, and owed no man anything.

And it was in keeping with the bigness of him, and his decent clean-kept pride, that he never told a living soul of what took place at Lobo, or accounted for the white scar on his upper lip; that had been wiped out and forgotten when the D. S. O. brought Norwood back to his own again!



The Twinkling Lights of Turnerville

by
Alexander
Gardiner



MADDOX and I were talking one day about electric lights.

"Great!" I said, "simply great"—being a poor talker.

"When they work," said Maddox, and related a bobtailed version of this story; but the meanest scribe can not depend entirely on the imagination of his friends; he must use acquaintances, too. Our servant-girl used to work for the Maddoxes; and I knew Cotter, night-clerk at the Palace Hotel in Turnerville.

The true and complete version is this:

While the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition was still in progress in Seattle they opened the County Fair at Turnerville, and Benjamin F. Maddox went there to sell plows. Turnerville is a smaller town than Seattle, situated in the eastern Washington red-apple belt, and with a cascade of the Cascade Mountains sufficiently near to furnish light for its streets and buildings, and light entertainment at times to its populace. Maddox was at that time a single man.

His second inquiry, this trip, at the Palace Hotel was, "Who with?"

It was bad grammar, but Cotter understood.

"With Mr. Hummel," he suggested hopefully, "if he——"

"Oh, Hummel!" called Maddox; and a cigar-drummer sauntered to the desk. "Hummel, do you like to sleep double?"

"Who with?" countered Hummel cautiously.

"Me," said Maddox.

"Oh!" said Hummel. He knew the hotel's crowded condition. "I can stand it if you can," he continued ungraciously. "I like the window open."

"I like air myself, and I sure hate to sleep double; but, if I must, give me a bedfellow that hates it too—he'll stay on his own side the bed."

"That's me," said Hummel. "You're on."

Maddox then extracted three cigars from Hummel's pocket, gave one each to Hummel and Cotter, agreed to "come in easy" if Hummel, who took an early morning

train, would arise in like "easy" manner, refused a drink, and went out.

"Cotter," said Hummel, "there goes a — fine man," and of the ways and whims of his brother salesman he spoke with generous power. He was the kind of drummer a drummer is supposed to be.

Maddox was not. Somewhat absent-minded for one thing—that is, outside of business. Other noteworthy points are that he was fairly good-looking, considerate, and very familiar with the architecture and domestic economy of the Palace Hotel.

Being so familiar, when he came in that night he waved aside Cotter's offer of guidance, accepting only one suit-case and a slab of brass; and, deep in thought had mounted a flight of stairs before realizing that he did not know the number of his room. He knew the clerk had just told him, but he had heard with the ear, not with the mind.

A moment he puzzled, then kicked himself, and beneath the corridor light glanced at the key-dangling brass slab in his hand. 111 was the number, and immediately he was almost certain that Cotter had said "107," but he knew his failings. He stepped to room 111 and, finding its door locked but unbolted and with no key in the lock, softly let himself in.

As though a result of his act, the corridor light dimmed, went out. He tried the switch just within the door, but obviously the "juice" had failed.

He searched his pockets and found no matches. He was tired, moreover a considerate young man, and mindful of his bargain with Hummel. Instead of demanding a lamp, he silently and expeditiously got pajamas from his suit-case by touch alone, undressed and put them on.

So expeditiously, in fact, that his eyes were not in the least accustomed to the gloom when, noting with satisfaction that the window stood wide, he crept into bed. Just in, noting with satisfaction that his bedfellow lay on the farther edge, he, true to his principles, took the nearer one and slept.



HOW long, is unknown. The point is that he woke. Perhaps the light roused him, for he had turned that switch, and while he slept "the juice came on," perhaps it was the beating against dormant faculties, trained to habits of rectitude, of a sense of being in wrong; there

could be no doubt of what completed the waking process. He still lay on the edge, faced unsociably outward, and the room's contents looked suspicious. He turned gently and raised on one elbow; and his heart sank through him and through the bed and rolled quietly across the floor to his number eight-and-a-half oxfords standing by the dresser.

If that was Hummel, how he had changed! It was not. Hummel was young and large, with a fat nose. This was an old, wizened, fierce man, with a thin beak of a nose that pointed right at Ben, as did also his other prominent features, consisting of white chin-whisker and bushy, sandy eyebrows. Even in sleep he looked truculent.

Maddox slid from that bed like a bashful snake; but he felt like a worm. 107—of course Cotter had said 107, and then had carelessly given him the wrong key. Now if he could but get away without waking this old man.

Quickly yet cautiously he slipped into overcoat and shoes and jammed his other belongings into his suit-case. He glanced at the sleeping man; his head had turned more to one side, so that whiskers, et cetera, again pointed accusingly at the intruder. The suit-case was too full; it would not close. Maddox fumbled a nervous moment, then took it under his arm to keep it from opening, and tiptoed toward the door.

He had almost reached it when again the electric glow dimmed quickly and vanished. Inwardly cursing Turnerville and all its light-works, he groped for the key, and groped again.

Came a thud on the floor behind him; a sharp, metallic click, and a voice, low-pitched but vibrant of bloodshed and murder:

"Hands up, thief! I've got you!"

He turned. His straining eyes could not penetrate one inch the utter darkness; yet he distinctly saw the man facing him there and saw his pistol—a giant specimen of that new-fangled sort which at the crook of a courageous or panic-stricken finger splatters many and horrid wounds through the vitals of whomsoever is before it. He wanted, oh! how he wanted, to cry out in protest, explanation, but not a sound could he command. He wanted to put up his hands, high, that he might be spared; instead, he used them both to clasp the suit-case to his

stomach, where he knew the rain of bullets would strike.

Thus he crouched for age-long seconds, until, so suddenly he almost thought it the pistol's flash, the light came on! Came and was gone; but its momentary gleam revealed his shame—revealed to him, across the narrow space, the man, old and little, but fierce, tense as some vicious beast or tame dog, about to spring. His chin-whisker did not point now, but was drawn in that he might peer along the arm, pointing full at Maddox the ugly black barrel of a fountain-pen! The other arm crooked at his side, and in that hand glittered the tin match-safe with which he had managed the click!



MADDOX did not stir. Blank astonishment held him now, for the moment of light. Instantly, with the shutting down again of darkness, the little man rushed, hurled himself. What he lacked in mass he made up in momentum; and with the top of his round head he smote Maddox a fearful blow in the suit-case. That well-stuffed buckler distributed the shock; nevertheless Maddox was driven violently back, and the door-knob gouged into the small of his back, arousing him to anger and activity. He kicked savagely at his assailant, now groveling dazedly somewhere on the floor, and missed him so hard that only the door and again its knob saved him from upset. He heard the other spring to his feet, cursing ably, and blunder over furniture.

Discretion asserted itself. As a mere human he wanted to wield a heavy chair in explanation to that old man; but as Ben Maddox he saw visions of unending embarrassment. As a drummer, old in emergency and expedient, and acquainted with the Palace Hotel, he decided what to do.

Yes, he was a rapid thinker in times of stress; if he had not been and had stayed to explain—but he did not. He tore open the door and, key in hand and suit-case still tightly hugged, dashed down the dark corridor with the speed of a scared pup. After him, like the tin-can, came the outraged and outrageous old man; but Maddox nimbly turned a corner, flattened himself to the wall and flung the key clattering on the stairs. Rounding the turn, seeing nothing in the complete darkness, the pursuer followed the sound.

Maddox heard him pound down toward the office and himself flitted back to 111, through it and paused at the window. Folk had stirred in adjacent rooms, but now all was still. No—hasty shoes thumped the steps below.

He crawled out and was on the roof of the kitchen porch. Its pitch was not so great that its moss-grown shingles might not be trodden, with a steady hand on window-ledges. He was taking a ready and private route himself to his own room—107. Safely there, the incident would be closed, or, at worst, explanation would be simpler in the morning.

The window of 109 was blinded, silent; he sneaked past, furtive, bearing his burden, like some gigantic pack-rat, and found surer foothold on the rungs of a ladder nailed on the porch roof from eaves to the foot of another running up the wall. A fire-escape it was, a survival, with the wooden building it scaled, of an earlier day, before the advent of five-cent apples and electric lights.

Here, at the window that was his goal, he paused. Misgiving smote him. What if Cotter had said 207? What if—

The lights of Turnerville flashed on, an instant glowed, and died, sudden and mysterious as God's own untrammelled lightning; and they showed him, a block away but running ponderously toward the hotel, the Town Marshal of Turnerville. He threw a leg over the sill and slid into the room.

Again he paused, and softly he called Max Hummel's name. He heard but gentle, regular breathing. He felt like a burglar—felt that he was a burglar, and hoped for fellow craftsmen's sake that they did not feel like this. His heart plunged up from somewhere and began kicking him violently in the neck.



RIGHT here Ben Maddox proved a claim to that higher courage that you read about. He was scared; yet he would not be influenced by his fear to ignore it. He would be above bravado. He considered the situation sanely. In testimony that this was his room he had but his own memory, always erratic; against it certain knowledge of a feeling, borne in upon him now, of positive assurance that it was not his room. And what right had he to take chances?

He quaked to the window, but crouched there, for a shout came to his ears from the street below. Followed a patter of many

feet on the board-walk; but the sounds died in distance. Pursuit evidently was diverted.

It was a good omen; then to strengthen it, no momentary flash this time, but bright and steady throughout the town, the corner arc-lights shone. Cheering, and they brought a cheering thought. Shucks! He could see—he could turn on the light and see who slept so soundly in that bed, though it must be Hummel. Cotter *had* said 107. Judging by the respiration, he could safely make sure, but he must hurry, before the light grew tired again.

Three stealthy steps. His hand encountered the dresser, and on its top he laid the suit-case—or rather on top of the various small articles Hummel seemed to have cluttered there. At last he found the swinging globe—right overhead, of course. He snapped it on.

His back was to the bed, but even so the first glance before him was sufficient to freeze him, arm still upraised, knees bent, and eyeballs starting. If he had been scared before, stark horror claimed him now, for the articles strewing the dresser and on which rested his sacrilegious suit-case were never the property of Max Hummel, nor indeed of any such as he! And adorning the homely chairs were dainty garments, filigree things that a lowly bachelor should have but faith in that such things are.

He would not, nor could he have turned; but his guilty eye sought the mirror, tilted just right, and dimly reflected there was the bed and its occupant, and the face was toward him—toward the light!

And a bright light in the eyes wakens most people. The thought changed fright's expression from paralysis to galvanic action. His first step was cautious as it was swift; then panic took him firmly by the ear. He did not even think to switch off the light, but it was unnecessary that he should. As he snatched up his suit-case and made for the window it most mercifully went out.

The suit-case banged noisily against the ledge. Gosh! Hanging face in, he kicked desperately for that ladder. At last one toe caught a rung, and he put all his weight on it—on the ladder that was old as the Palace Hotel, that was old as Turnerville, which is young for a town but old for a wooden ladder. The rung broke, pitching him heavily sideways to the roof, whence he skidded and rolled with fearful velocity over the eaves and into an apple-tree—a big red-apple tree!

They prune them low-growing and wide-sweeping about Turnerville; and those lower limbs broke his fall, and vice versa. But it was a sudden and brambly journey at that; and when Maddox finally struck bottom, amid a shower of leaves, twigs and big red apples, he struck with violence.

In some circles of activity ten seconds is considered ample time for recovery from a knockout; football rules, for men having greater space in which to acquire momentum, allow two minutes. Somewhere between these extremes Ben came to and arose, "dazed but unhurt," as a hero should, wondering a little how he had managed to come so far and so fast.

Then he saw exactly how. There came a little squeal and a big thud on the roof overhead, swift confusion of sounds, and another form avalanched over the eaves and through the tree, making the latter part of the trip somewhat faster than he had done in breaking trail. In a second shower of apples Maddox braced himself and caught her. Yes, emphatically a *her*, clad, over nightwear, only in one long, light-weight, enveloping garment. Even in the darkness he recognized both girl and kimono, though he knew the names of neither.

Still holding her, he rose from their knees, and, an instant, she leaned against him, then sprang violently back and faced him.

"Oh!" she said.



HAD Turnerville's lights elected that moment to shine, Ben would have been visibly embarrassed. Something kind of snaky dropped from the tree to the back of his neck, and he put it in his pocket, quite unconscious of it or of anything but himself. Every tone of his first speech was defensive:

"I—I had to catch you—you might have been hurt! I——"

"What were you doing in my room?" she demanded with disconcerting directness.

"I beg your pardon," said Maddox wretchedly. "It was my fault, of course, but——"

"Your fault?" echoed the lady.

"Yes," he agreed, feeling quite as inadequate as the apology, "but I'm not drunk, or a burglar."

"I know you're not a burglar," she said. "At least not a very good—I mean, expectant one. I was awake."

"Then you——" he began, and stuck.

If she had seen all up there, even to that profaning glance in the mirror? Life—and life on the road—had touched lightly Ben's natural modesty. He wished it were even darker.

She broke the brief silence:

"But if you are not—if—What *were* you doing in my room?"

Perhaps conceiving of likely explanation, she drew more away from him and straightened to her full five-feet-nothing, in slippers, and her hair down.

Even such misery of embarrassment as his can be goaded to speech, even such guilt to justification, before a woman. In a few blundering sentences, beginning with his name and business, he told the improbable tale of his recent activities, of course leaving out just enough detail to make it baldly and wildly improbable; and knowing his own veracity, it surprised him not, only comforted, as he felt that she believed.

"Of course," he concluded, "I'd have endured anything rather than—but if you didn't think I was—stealing, why—how came——"

"Oh!" she cried, "I wasn't chasing you. You see, you did take something—by accident, Mr.—Mr. Maddox. My—something of mine caught under the lid of your suitcase. I had to have it, so I was going to scream, but then you fell and I knew you wouldn't come back. I looked out and thought I saw it on the roof. I just slipped on something and stepped out and—and slipped on something. I guess my—it must be still caught in your suit-case. It's still on the roof," she continued, seeing him look about for his property. "I passed it."

"Well," said Maddox, "I must get you out of this first—in, I mean. Are you dressed? Would you rather go right in by the office, or shall I get the back door opened up?"

She gasped.

"Not either way. It would look so peculiar. We must get a ladder, or something. Besides, if you've been dodging around all night just to——"

"Don't, I beg of you, consider me," interrupted heroic Ben. "Of course I could explain," he added, and hoped he could.

"No," she said with finality, "I couldn't go in that way—on my own account; and you couldn't make fa— You couldn't make them understand your motives as I do, being in much the same fix. But couldn't I climb

back to my window by the apple-tree?"

"It doesn't stand close enough; you see we kind of shot out into it. But there must be a ladder around."

He began his search of the dark backyard, a search that netted only barked shins; but with the stimulus of action and of this much-abused strange maiden's astonishing faith and reliance his wonted fertility of resource returned.

"I'll tell you," he said, in the eager tones of conspiracy, "I know just one man in this town well enough to wake him up and get what I want, and no questions answered. Every householder in a place like this must have a ladder. So, if you don't mind waiting——"

"Hadn't I better go too?" she interrupted. "It might be heavy."

"Not safe, I fear, but if you don't like the idea of staying alone——"

"I am not afraid," she corrected proudly.

"Then take my coat," quoth the knightly Maddox. "It's cold standing still." Ignoring a flurried refusal, he had it unbuttoned and one shoulder out, but she sprang forward and jerked it back into place by the lapel. "Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Maddox," she admonished, and like a slap, realization came to him of just how ridiculous he would look without that coat. He kept it and was saved, as shall presently appear, but the touch on his collar-bone of her slender hand was as an accolade. He seized it. She snatched it away, and, uttering he knew not what—but she did—of romantic extravagance, he stumbled away to get that ladder.

Ladder? He would have brought her a spiral staircase! Why had he never known that the world held such girls? She must be beautiful, too. Sure she was!



FILLED with high resolve, he slunk through the dark, empty streets, three blocks west and one block north, and thundered at the portals of the two-story frame house where he knew Driscoll resided—"Old Bije" Driscoll, his customer and friend. But like that of Mark Twain's Adam, this knowledge of Ben's was not so. After some minutes of his thundering above-mentioned, a surly looking stranger protruded his head and a lamp from an upper window.

"I must see Mr. Driscoll," said Maddox, from the darkness. "It's important."

"Moved," said the surly-looker surlily, and withdrew his head.

"Where to?" demanded Ben, but the window was down and closed.

Only for a moment though was he at loss. Dimly at first, then brightly, cheerily triumphant, the lights of Turnerville flashed on, revealing a large new house—a corner house, an arc-light on that corner. A new house, surely with a ladder about its premises. If he could find it, if the light would only burn a little while!

With a wary eye for Turnerville's fat Marshal he fumbled at the door of a promising out-house, bending over its low-set latch.

"Got you, you — hen-thief!" announced an exultant voice behind him.

One startled glance, shielding his face with his arm, caught schoolboy fashion. From the shadow of an innocent lumber pile not fifty feet away a man stepped, leveling a gun, and it was Driscoll, his friend! The same second, ere Maddox could speak or turn, the gun roared, and he sprang high, his frantic "ouch" ringing shrill echo to the heavy report. The generous charge of rock salt had struck true, just where, stooping as he was, the coat draped over.

Again the gun roared, and again he shrilled involuntary protest, though flying coat-tails this time tempered the blow. Beyond the fence he stopped and would have tried to make himself known. Too late. The garrison had reloaded. Ben ducked and scuttled in the fence's friendly shelter to the corner, and at that point, their diabolical purpose served, the lights went out.

But they might come on again, mightn't they? He paused not—quite the contrary—for the length of a long block. His wind was good for another, but here he collided with a large, soft person who rounded the corner, exactly timed for disaster.

At the second complete revolution Ben came uppermost. Fat arms hugged him, and his chin, lovingly gouged into a fat bosom, pressed a smooth, metallic surface. He knew the significance of a tin star on a fat man—knew he was "resisting an officer," but no conventional prejudice stayed his hand, or his knee, or his elbow. Immediate ancestors of his must have fought Indians. Thus far he had sought only escape and incognito, but, hounded, harried, salted and assaulted, now all his latent savagery and ability centered upon the job at hand, which

happened to be the Marshal; and though lacking the wildcat ring tactics of the man in 111, the Marshal himself was willing.

Maddox again on top, the Marshal heaved him off and, lying at his side, earnestly bumped his head against the curb. Maddox countered with a knee to the Marshal's ribs and followed up with a vicious punch full on the cement pavement beside the Marshal's ear. Stimulated by bleeding knuckles, he wrenched free and to his feet. The Marshal was up almost as nimbly. Both were reeling.

Then the Marshal remembered his gun. It was his undoing. Maddox grappled, including the other's right arm in his hug; the Marshal's left was free, but he used it only to reach for the gun in his right hip-pocket, an effort in which, owing to his well-rounded figure, he could not possibly succeed. His strength fast ebbing and his heel coming back of the Marshal's, Ben heaved all his weight forward. They went down in common ruin, and the Marshal stayed. He was heavy, and his head had reached the sidewalk first.

Ben felt for his heart, but was disappointed. It still beat, so he searched with nervous haste and presently he found them—a brass shotgun shell full and two loose ones besides—matches!

He clutched them, and, restraining an impulse to kick their prostrate owner, limped joyously away. First he must reassure the girl that he was still in her service. After that, a ladder!



HE WHISTLED low; he called. Still no answer. Stumbling over something, he knelt and struck a hard-won match. The obstacle was his suit-case, its one time contents strewn around it, and upreared against the eaves he saw a ladder—unmistakably a neat little wooden ladder! Dazedly, painfully, for many a bruise and salted wound was stiffening, he mounted it and used another match. The window of 107 was closed, black, tight, uncompromising.

Of course were she still outside he could but aid her to get in, but— And he did not even know her name.

She must have found this ladder while the light was on that time that Driscoll shot him. Heavy, too, for a woman. He dragged it away and found his watch among his effects. Four-thirty—a depressing hour.

He was cold, sleepy too, and sore. He wished he knew how the Marshal fared.

Well, he had the Marshal's matches. He managed to achieve a painful toilet before skulking around to the street to reconnoiter. A milk-wagon clattered into town. Day was breaking—no rose-tinted skies, but dull, plain daylight. Then, pale and sickly in the dawn, electric lights burned once again, and they seemed to grin at him—a pale, sickly, mean grin.

Suit-case and courage in hand, he advanced to the sidewalk's edge. As though knowing all and pitying, the clerk yawned, rose without looking out, and wandered kitchenward. Still Maddox waited, for a man had hurried down the stairs. Hummel it was, up early for his train, but he planked his key on the desk and passed on to the dining-room.

Ben had sped no faster before Driscoll's artillery than he did now, until safe in the lavatory with that key. Even then he ascertained before a glass that he was presentable, ere he looked at the number—and passed a hand over his eyes and looked again.

It was unbelievable. He reëntered the office, still deserted, and turned the register pages to his own signature. Yes, there it stood, in the appointed column—the number of his room and Hummel's—206!

Then and finally the lights of Turnerville blinked warning and vanished, and in the undiminished daylight he climbed the stair to his room, but he felt no elation—no sense of fulfillment whatever in reaching that bedroom. He did not care to sit down, thank you, but stood gazing at the floor—a common, uninteresting floor, but almost beneath it slept the girl that he— Could one love a girl whose face he had seen just once, in a mirror, and whose name he did not know? Interested, then. He could be no less than interested in a girl whose chamber window he had scaled and who, however unwittingly, had plunked from it into his arms.

And she must set him apart from other men. Yes, as a fool!



DISCONSOLATELY reviewing the whole episode, he shuffled to the window and considered the apple-tree. A lone sock hung forlornly there, out of place, yet not an unusual or a noticeable sock; and it gave him an idea. He took an

inventory, and in the course of it he drew from a pocket of his former overcoat, not the gloves he sought, but something that came and came, as his jaw dropped lower and lower, until the thing was all out and he held it dangling, long, heavy and lustrous!

Something dropped on Ben, you remember, immediately following the lady, but he did not remember. It is worthy commentary that he cared not at all where he got it, and he knew whose hair it was. He recognized it. What he had seen reflected in the mirror had of course grown on her head, but they had it to match, didn't they?

Well, she would want this, if he was any judge, and, by George, it must be made some way to serve as a reintroduction!

Blithely and boldly he made his way down to the office. He must find out her name.

"What did you say?" asked Cotter, but Maddox had not said.

He was himself acquiring information. There it was, in plainest, most assertive of script: rooms 111 and 107 were occupied respectively by R. E. Garrity and daughter, Spokane, Wash. And daughter!—the fierce little man of 111, and daughter!

He felt suddenly robbed of all initiative, so he went to the dining-room, to the routine task of breakfast. Why, she and her father would compare notes! She knew his name, and that old man would surely denounce him. Probably she would, too, since she no longer needed ladders.

Let them denounce then. He cracked an egg viciously, with one blow of his teaspoon, and glanced around, boldly—until his eye rested upon two persons just entering, then he shrank down. They were the man of 111 and an even smaller girl, oddly like him too, though she could hardly have been described as fierce! Ben could not see that she needed more hair.

Fate hurriedly disguised herself as a waitress and came forward.

"Set here, please," she requested, in tones of command, indicating the table solely occupied by Maddox.

He straightened up—he was in for it now! Miss Garrity's pause was just perceptible when their eyes met; and just perceptible was the heightening of her color. She took one irresolute step, halted and spoke to the old gentleman, who hurried from the room, grumbling audibly. Then she advanced, with perfect assurance, and she was looking

right over Ben's head. He saw that she was about to sit there and ignore him. Idiot that he felt himself to be, why should she speak to him?

"Good morning, Mr. Maddox," she said affably.

"A-uh-uh," remarked Ben, spilling his coffee, "good morning. Won't you—that is, allow me——" He finally showed her instead, by pulling out a chair, and she thanked him graciously.

With a quick side glance she ascertained that other breakfasters were fairly remote and busy. She leaned forward, her eyes dancing, and spoke rapidly,

"Excuse me, but father will be back any moment. Oh, Mr. Maddox!"—with the most bewitching of smiles—"what did you do to father?"

"He—he ran his head into my suit-case. I didn't mean——"

"He thinks he was hit with a club," she

went on, in huge enjoyment. "And he thinks it was such a big man. You must never tell him. He would be disappointed, and father's a dear."

In ecstasy of fearful delight, Ben took the plunge:

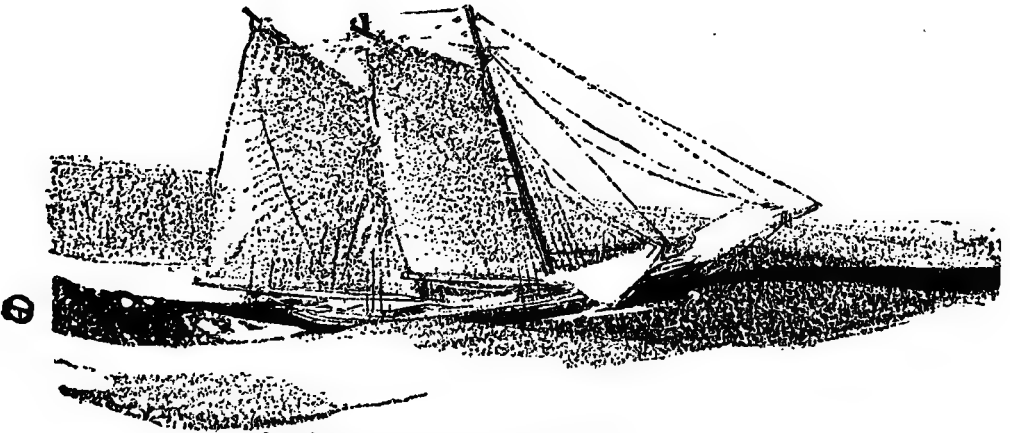
"Then am I to have a show, Miss Garrity—to make a fresh start, and try to get acquainted? I——"

She stiffened a little.

"Oh!" she said, "we could never start right now, it was so extremely dreadful; but—but I do want to know, too, what you did to the poor old Marshal. Hush, here comes father!"

Quaking inwardly, Maddox rose to acknowledge the introduction, and the terrible, little man frowned upon him fiercely and aimed his truculent beard straight at him:

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Maddox," he said, in the mildest of tones.



Frenchy by Colin Mackay

THE schooner, close-hauled to the brisk breeze, bounded lightly over the tumbling seas as if waltzing to the wild music bursting from the lighted square of the cabin companion. She had left Cape Island that morning bound to Halifax, to fit out for the Spring trip to the Banks, and skipper and

crew, freed from the restraints of home, were making merry over their grog—making the night riotous with the wailing of fiddles, the braying of fog-horns, the rollicking choruses of the full-blooded fishermen abandoning themselves to the delights of a drunk.

Suddenly the sounds of revelry ceased,

and a big, bare-headed man clambered hastily up the companion, gasping as if in a struggle for air. A roar of derisive laughter followed him, and then a deep bass voice, husky with drink, exclaimed in tones of scathing contempt,

"A fine skipper he'd have made us, the — Frenchman!"

The big man staggered aft, sat down heavily on the transom, and looked about him in a dazed, bewildered way. His head throbbed madly, his throat seemed on fire, and his flesh, despite the cold, was moist and clammy with the sweat of the weakness that was still upon him.

Presently, as the giddiness passed, in the watery light of a full moon sailing high in a windy sky strewn with wisps of smoky cloud whirling confusedly, he saw standing over him a short, powerfully built man, and beyond a half-dozen crowding figures swaying uncertainly to the reeling motion of the deck.

"Get me a drink, one of you," he muttered weakly.

The stout man laughed derisively.

"Get you blazes! You've been drunk now for two days. And you thought to go master of this packet, did you? Ha, ha! When old Morgan saw you tumbling about the streets he changed his mind. I'm master now, and you—I've shipped you as boy, my fine Frenchman!"

Frenchy, suddenly remembering that he had taken a drink with this man, realized that he had been drugged and shanghaied—shanghaied aboard the ship he expected to command! A cold deadly anger stirred within him. His faculties cleared as if at a dash of cold water, but the rush of blood that mounted to his head like wine seemed to leave his limbs numbed and lifeless, as if weighted with many chains.

"We'll teach you to try to hoist yourself over us," the skipper continued sarcastically, thrusting forth a mocking, triumphant face. "And if you don't think we've treated you right, get to your feet and I'll give you all the satisfaction you want!"

But Frenchy, powerless to move, sat very still, outraged, silent and dignified.

"Ah, you haven't the spunk of a frog. And you call yourself a descendant of the great Des Monts!"

The skipper snapped his fingers contemptuously under the nose of the silent and motionless Frenchman, then turning

on his heel, he staggered away forward and disappeared into the fo'castle. The other men, venting their disappointment in jeering comment and scornful laughter, dropped back into the cabin. Suddenly the ship heeled—heeled till her lee rail was buried in the milky foam of the racing seas. Startled, Frenchy sprang up and stepped into the light streaming from the companion—a commanding figure dominated for the moment by the instinct of his craft.

"Squalls and bime-by snow!" he exclaimed, gazing to windward where a bank of blackness was resting sullenly above the horizon.

And then, feeling his strength returning, realizing that the skipper was too drunk to attend to his duty, he turned, suddenly and sharply, to the second hand and added peremptorily,

"Time to shorten down. Call 'em up before they get too drunk."

The second hand, somberly drunk, raised himself from the pinnacle and leered at him angrily.

"What the —? Mind your flaming business!" he growled thickly. "I don't take orders, and I don't want advice, from a drunken Frenchman, or a frightened one, either. I never knew a frog-eater that wasn't white-livered—afraid of a little wind," he added sneeringly.

Goaded to madness by this taunt, rousing afresh his rankling sense of outrage, flouting him in the most sensitive passion of his life—his pride of race—Frenchy flung himself upon the mate, beating him to the deck, pouncing upon him, pounding him as if insanely intent on annihilating him. In a few moments his frenzy, or his new found strength, spent itself, and hearing the scuffle of the men rushing up in response to the excited cries of the helmsman, he sprang to his feet—and something descended upon his head, enveloping him in a vibrant, blinding rush of shooting stars.

But he did not lose consciousness, and even as he fell, he saw a man spring from the mob pouring out of the cabin, wrest something from the helmsman and smite him to the deck.

Next moment the man was standing over him, wildly wielding a handspike, furiously vociferating:

"Stand back, — you, stand back! I'm a Frenchman, too! Stand back, or I'll kill some of you!"

AS THE men paused before the menace of the whirling handspike, Frenchy and the helmsman got to their feet, and, instinctively rubbing their broken heads, filled the air with the odor of blood—showed their hands red with it. The men got the scent of it—the hot, pungent, intoxicating smell of blood spilled in wrath. The effect was electrical, elemental—a mighty gust of passion fanning the incandescent fury, the stern, primal feud of blood, the ever smoldering enmities of race. The men, stripped here of all convention, saw red and went wild with rage.

The Englishmen, with stern savage cries of "Kill the Frenchmen! Kill the — Frenchmen!" rushed for weapons; and the two Frenchmen, furious and defiant, prepared for the fight. The moon looked down careless as of old upon this sudden upleaping of the passions of race, upon the Englishmen and the Frenchmen fighting drunk with the sight and smell of their blood—frenzied with the rage of hate, the lust of strife, the mad desire to fly at one another's throats and slay. A boy fled forward crying loudly in shocked, frightened tones:

"Skipper, oh, skipper, there'll be murder done here to-night. Oh, my God! Such men!"

And then suddenly the schooner, having been left to her own devices, swung broadside to the wind, and tripping on a sharp, wedge-like swell, fell right over on her beam-ends and lay there trembling, amid the racket and roar of ballast shifting. But quick as she went, the men were quicker, and though some of them were soused under, all managed to haul themselves up under the weather rail.

The second hand sang out for the skipper, but there was no answer. And Frenchy realized that the fo'castle companion, being on the leese, was under water—realized with a feeling of exultation even then that the skipper was caught like a rat in a trap!

The schooner lay with her spars and sails prone on the sea, rising and falling heavily, while the waves breaking against her bilge leaped in long tongues of spray right over her, deluging the men clinging under the rail. Evidently she would never right, and when the only dory to windward broke from its lashings and pitched upright into the belly of the mainsail, Frenchy sprang after it, calling to his comrade to follow him.

As they scrambled in, the dory floated to

the roll of a sea whelming over the sail and was borne on the resurge out of the reach of the searing gaff—out, too, of the lee made by the schooner into the rush of the wind and the wild race of ragged seas. But ere she could ship much water Frenchy, hastily getting out the oars, brought her head up to it, and held her so, leaping wildly.

As she drifted off, loud cries came down the wind—cries of rage and entreaty as the men realized that there were no other boats. Frenchy, flinging his face to the wind, yelled back, exultantly, derisively:

"Ah, ha, you Englishmen, we come back for you—sure!"

Then the moon was blotted out, and with a rush of cold air a squall of snow shut down like a lid. Immediately the wind piped up till the swift-running seas seethed beneath the spite of it. The little dory leaped and dived like a frantic thing, flashing the spray over her in solid sheets.

But Frenchy, his broken head bared to the scourging blasts, the pelting hail and slashing sprays, held her up to it bravely—tugging at the oars in a fury of effort as if he would vent the violence of his passions upon the snarling seas. The man was drunk with the riot of his emotions, the lust of strife, the glut of danger, of pain, of hate. Now and then, flinging his face to the wind, he cursed the Englishmen, passionately, horribly. Beaupré baled for dear life.

In a short time the squall passed over and the moon, bursting through a rent in the clouds, splayed with a soft and silvery radiance the foam-bonneted crests of the racing seas. And presently Frenchy, coming out of his terrible ecstasy and realizing that they had been blown out of sight of the wreck, said quietly,

"I guess we may as well run for it; we ought to fetch Cape Island somewhere. Get out the other pair of oars."

So soon the little boat, urged by two pair of oars, was flying before the gathering gale—fleeing like a frightened thing from the towering combers rushing up astern, leaping after her in roaring avalanches of foam. On and on she sped, enveloped now and then in the blinding smother of snow-squalls; on and on through the white wrath of waters growing wilder every hour; on and on until it seemed she evaded only by a hair's breadth the swift cataracting swoop of the breaking seas racing after her like a pack of ravening wolves.

And yet, in that race with death, the men, toiling at the oars, sang as with mighty strokes they lifted her out of the trough ere the towering seas could comb over and overwhelm her in a fury of foam—sang with the joy of proving their skill and their strength in a tussle with the sea. And now and then Frenchy, thinking of the men on the wreck, chuckled grimly.

At length in the midst of a squall of snow, the flying dory shot up suddenly to a great height, hurled through mid air for a moment, and then swept swiftly down an avalanche of foam into a welter of raging surf. She put her bows clear under and seemed to stop dead—stop dead while the following sea swarmed up astern huge and horrific, a mighty wall of water advancing to overwhelm her! But with a bound she responded to the frantic strokes of the terrified Frenchmen and was away again on her mad career, throwing up her heels as if in defiance of the monster swell combing over in a majestic cataract of yeasty water.

The bucking bronco of the seas had leaped right over the outer range of breakers, and was scurrying for the land not a cable's length away—bounding lightly over the tumbling flotsam of foam flung from the wreck of waves upon the reef. In a few moments she was lying high and dry upon the shelving beach.

II

 AFTER breathing themselves a bit, the Frenchmen trudged up the beach, and presently, as the snow took off, saw before them a big house on a hill, lit up as for celebration. Approaching, they recognized the house of the owner, and realized that some social function was in progress. But in they went without a moment's hesitation, the wildness of the sea still upon their faces, the ruthless rage of it still in their hearts. In the hall-way, they saw the owner himself and, as he started back as if before a vision of ghosts, Frenchy's voice boomed out scornfully, savagely,

"Well, Mr. Morgan, if you were a party to having me drugged and shanghaied you made a big mistake. Your schooner was hove down while your fine skipper was drunk in the fo'castle. When I tried to get the second hand to take sail of her, I got my head broke for my pains! All hands

were——"

He was about to say drunk, but catching sight of the white frightened faces of the women crowding the doorways, he suddenly realized the tragic nature of his news, and was seized with compunction.

"All hands were safe enough when we left," he went on hastily, in changed tones. "The schooner won't sink in a hurry, and maybe they'll be picked off. Beaupré and I managed to get into the only dory to windward as it broke adrift, and just landed through the surf."

As if his story had stunned them, the men and women, watching wide-eyed, stood for a space, mute and motionless as statues. A mighty blast of wind beat upon the house with a sudden note of raving; it passed; and at once the thunder of the surf crashing upon the shore seemed to fill the world with a harsh, mournful and menacing sound, like the beating of mighty wings. Then the women caught their breath with hard racking sobs; and the storm broke.

The Frenchmen backed away from it, hands uplifted as if warding blows—backed out of the house. Old Morgan and the men-folk followed them, bareheaded and dumfounded.

"Mother of God!" said Frenchy suddenly; "I was a brute, bursting in on them like that. But what are you men standing around for like—like so many owls?" he added passionately. "Why don't you get a move on you? Take a boat and pick 'em off!"

"All the fishing-boats are away over among the Turket Islands," said old Morgan, finding his voice for the first time. "And, anyway, a sailboat would be useless in this gale. We'll send to Yarmouth for a tug."

"A tug from Yarmouth—it would never get there in time. The men may live till daylight, but not much after."

"It's the best we can do. There's not a boat in the harbor except that devil's machine of Whalen's. She's drowned four men already, and it would be madness to venture out in her to-night. Moreover, all the fishermen are away. There's none but landmen around here now; except you two, and we can't expect you to go in Whalen's accursed craft. How you escaped——"

"No, you can't expect me to risk my life for chaps that put shame on me like they did," Frenchy interrupted fiercely. "They

—you—all think French Acadians are no good. I don't think that of Englishmen. I know if the fishermen were here some of 'em would start out quick to the rescue. And, by —, I'll show you Frenchmen can be just as good as they make 'em! I'll go out in the devil's machine as you call it, if I have to go alone!"

"Not alone you don't go," said Beaupré cheerfully. "I'm about done up, but I feel mighty reckless and game for anything."

A couple of men stepped out from the group on the veranda and said they were willing to go along, though they weren't much good in a boat.

"If you're no good, we don't want you," said Frenchy peremptorily. "Besides, your women have enough to bear now, without any more of you running a chance of getting lost. We're off to get the boat ready; you fellows bring us along some food, whiskey and clothes."



AWAY they went in weariness, cold and hunger forgotten in the inspiration of their desperate resolution, and, after walking a mile or so, came to the harbor on the lee side of the island. A two-masted lugger of about fifteen tons, decked over save for a cockpit aft, was moored to one of the wharves, and jumping aboard, they close-reefed her sails fore and aft.

In a short time they got the supplies, and hoisting sail, they stood to sea with a dory in tow. Skirting the shore, they soon breasted the pitch of Cape Sable, and their flattening aft the sheets drove her recklessly into the wrath of the Atlantic surges. She made desperate weather of it.

At every plunge she put her bows under sheer to the foremast; at every leap she tossed the broken crests over in a storm of spray, and now and then as she floundered in the trough, her sails becalmed, a green sea would rake her fore and aft, bursting upon the men in the cockpit, blinding, drenching, smothering them—striving to wash them overboard.

"She's a balking machine all right," cried Frenchy. "Get a lashing about the both of us, or we'll be washed away."

"I'm thinkin' you'd better turn back and wait in the lee of the Cape till it moderates," said Beaupré dubiously, as he rigged life-lines.

But Frenchy, forcing her into it, answer-

ed angrily as he bent his head to the buffet of a flying dallop of uprooted sea:

"Turn back? Not on your life! We're not on a yachting trip!"

"I don't see how you're going to find the wreck. We'll never get to windward far enough."

"I cal'late to pick her up on this course 'bout daylight. The tide'll sweep her off the Cape," said Frenchy quietly.

"Drive her into it then!" shouted Beaupré recklessly. "But if anything carries away——"

So she stormed along, reeling to the staggering buffets of the gale, shuddering violently to the savage assaults of the combing seas. At times she wallowed into it as if in a frantic endeavor to slat the spars out of her or drown herself in the frenzied wash of the waves; but the men in the cockpit kept her hammering at it, relentlessly hammering, while their hearts throbbed in their throats with excitement and anxiety. The little dory followed astern, prancing like a stormy petrel over the welter of waves swarming away to leeward like serried snow-drifts.

Toward morning the weather moderated, and shortly after daylight, sure enough, they sighted the wreck barely a mile to windward. The schooner lay as she had been hove down, the drag of the spars keeping her decks to leeward; and presently, as they beat up, they made out the men lashed under the rail. Some were waving their hands feebly. Others showed no interest.

In a short time the lugger ranged within hail, and Frenchy sang out cheerily:

"Ho, boys, get a line and bend on something to float the end down to us. We'll have to haul you through the water."

"We can't help ourselves; you'll have to come aboard," the second hand answered in a voice no bigger than a babe's.

The Frenchmen looked at each other appalled. The lugger couldn't be left to look after herself, and one man couldn't take a dory through the raffle under the lee of the wreck and pick off helpless men in that sea. And evidently the men were about done for—not likely to live till the sea went down. And another gale might spring up any moment:

"It looks as though we've made a mess of it," said Beaupré bitterly.

But Frenchy, his eyes ablaze, his voice vibrant with relief, sang out energetically,

"Get that coil of rope out of the cuddy. We'll move her to the wreck."



AND so, when a few moments later the lugger rounded to in the lee of the wreck, Frenchy boarded the dory and, taking the end of the rope, rowed up and made it fast to the main topmast. Then, getting his comrade aboard, he pulled up again, turned the dory around, and, as the spars lunged under, backed her over the spring-stay into the space between the spars, and swung her stern toward the fore-rigging. Whereupon Beaupré jumped out and gained the shrouds.

The dory tossed and tumbled wildly amid the maze of spars, booms, tangled cordage and torn canvas, rearing and plunging to the roll of the sea. The half-dead men looked on silently, as if fascinated—as if expecting every moment to see her dashed to pieces. But Frenchy, fighting against the swing and surge of the sea, held her steady between the spars, while Beaupré cut the nearest man adrift, dragged him out into the rigging, dropped him into the stern of her, and tumbled in himself. Then Frenchy pulled out over the spring-stay, dropped down to the lugger, and held her alongside, while Beaupré hoisted his man to the deck of the lugger.

So they toiled back and forth in constant peril of their lives till the last man had been picked off—and none too soon, either. The men were chilled to the heart, and just about ready to give up the ghost. As soon as they were dragged into the warmth of the cuddy they sank into a coma and lay like so many corpses. The Frenchmen went to work upon them immediately, forcing hot whisky down their throats, chafing their numbed limbs, and in an hour or so had the satisfaction of knowing that all of them were alive.

"And now to cut the skipper out of the fo'castle," said Frenchy briskly. "Bring up that ax."

But when they went on deck they found the lugger had parted the hawser and was drifting off before the wind. And what was worse, snow was falling thick and fast, shutting out the wreck—everything a cable's length away. Swearing angrily, they put sail on her and started to beat up again, straining their eyes into the smother. But though they tacked back and forth for an hour or more they saw no sign of the wreck.

So Frenchy determinedly hove the lugger to.

"We'll have to wait till it clears up," he growled savagely.

"I'm thinking you'd better make a start for the land," said Beaupré uneasily. "'Tis ten chances to one we don't find her again, and maybe the skipper's done for anyway. And if we don't get these fellows home soon it may go hard with them. All that fine food is spoiled—a soggy mass on the cuddy floor; and there's not a drop of water aboard. We can't stand this sort of thing much longer, and if we go to pieces, all of us'll be lost!"

But Frenchy, his iron-hard face stamped with dogged determination gave no sign he heard him.

"Besides, we may get blown off the coast, and starve," Beaupré went on argumentatively. "You're putting all our lives in peril, and for a man——"

"You go turn in and take a nap," ordered Frenchy suddenly, imperiously. "You're getting light-headed. Go on now; I'll look after this packet."



AND so hour after hour while the snow fell steadily, persistently, as if it intended to fall forever, Frenchy sat alone at the tiller, maneuvering the lugger back and forth in quest of the wreck. And as he sat there, the terrible tension he had been laboring under ever since he woke from his drugged sleep began to tell upon him, and finally the reaction came, leaving him weak, sick and intolerably sleepy.

At times his head swam with the uncanny feeling of lightness born of pain and utter weariness, and, thinking he was going to pieces, he would start up in a panic to put the helm over and head her for land. But as if the exertion roused his failing faculties, his indomitable will would instantly assert itself and he would sit down again, cursing himself for a coward and weakling, smiting the washboard as if to test his strength. Oh, no, he wouldn't give up yet!

At length he saw, as in a dream, the second hand and three or four of the men clambering out of the cuddy, looking around them wonderingly with wild bloodshot eyes.

"Hey, Frenchy, when are you going to get us home?" the second hand asked querulously.

"When I get the skipper," Frenchy answered drowsily.

"The skipper—he's dead. You get us

home quick," commanded the second hand. "We're nearly crazy with hunger and thirst."

"I'm searching for the skipper, and I've got to find him."

"You start for home right off," cried the second hand menacingly, "or by —— we'll make you! Come on, boys. We don't want to get blown off the coast and starve to death!"

Frenchy, now thoroughly awake, watched them coming painfully toward him. Sick, tired and sleepy as he was, he felt like letting them have their way. He knew he was risking their lives as well as his own for the sake of a man who had played a scurvy trick upon him. And he had done enough to prove——

"Put the helm up, I say!" the mate cried at him. "We've suffered enough on your account. If it hadn't been for you the schooner wouldn't have capsized!"

Suddenly Frenchy seized the ax lying in the cockpit and sprang to his feet.

"Get back into that cuddy!" he roared furiously. "Get back before I split your skulls! I'm master here, and I'll keep you out here till doomsday or get the skipper! You're a precious lot! After I risk my life for you, you blame me for the wreck, do you? If you hadn't been drunk—Get forward before I kill you!"

Swinging the ax above his head, he drove the frightened men into the cuddy and, telling them where to find the whisky, closed and lashed the scuttle. Then, going aft again, he sat down, trembling with weakness. Oh, no, he wouldn't let these Englishmen come over him—turn him, Frenchy De Monts, from his purpose. He was not the man to do things by halves—to desert a wreck with a man in her. He had his quarrel with the skipper, and would give him a good punching if he ever got him ashore. But he wouldn't leave even an enemy to perish like a rat in a trap.

And so he kept his weary vigil till night came—till the moon rose and cleared off the snow—till at last he saw the wreck drifting into the glittering belt of moonlight lying upon the sea. By that time he could scarcely keep his eyes open, but rousing himself with a mighty effort, he put the helm up and bore down and hove the lugger to the lee of the wreck. Then he went into the cuddy to rouse Beaupré, but he could not get Beaupré to his feet; and he

could not rouse any of the other weary ones.

Swearing savagely, he returned to the deck. He felt as if he were engaged in a futile struggle with a malevolent fate, and his first impulse was to get away from the neighborhood of that accursed wreck and the hated man marooned in her fo'castle. But in a moment he was himself again—the cool, keen, indomitable master-fisherman. Oh, no, he couldn't confess himself beaten after daring and suffering so much. And suddenly, noting that the sky was clear as a bell, and the sea nearly as smooth as a lake, he laughed as if in amused scorn of himself. Give up on such a night? Oh, no!



BUT he knew he must make haste, or he would go to pieces altogether.

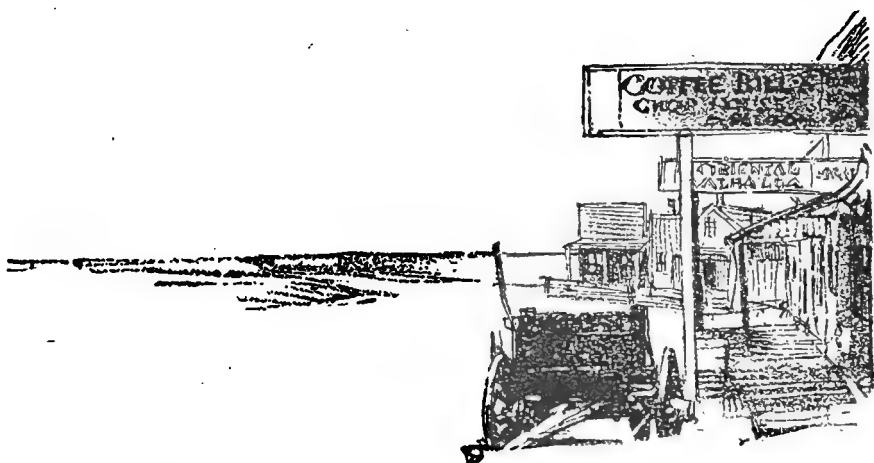
So he hauled the dory alongside, bent the end of the lugger's hawser to her stern, and tumbled in—laughing recklessly as in his trembling eagerness he nearly fell overboard. Then pulling up to the wreck, he scrambled aboard and made the painter fast. In a few moments he was rapping the deck with his ax, hallooing hoarsely. Instantly the answer came—a muffled shout and a sound of blows near at hand.

At the sound, Frenchy, thrilling with exultation, hastily rigged a life-line about his waist, and, standing on the foremast, went to work to cut a hole through the deck. He fairly sobbed with the agony of his efforts, and presently, as the imprisoned man got a chance to escape, he could feel the wreck settling in the sea. But, heedless of the danger, he toiled on desperately in a final burst of energy, and in less than half an hour was helping the skipper out of his dungeon. In a few minutes more they were safe aboard the lugger, standing in for the land, while the skipper silently watched the wreck sinking into the silvery glitter astern and Frenchy rapidly sketched the story of the rescue.

"And you're a dirty scoundrel, skipper," he ended quietly. "And I'd lick the day-lights out of you—only I guess you've suffered enough."

"Ay, I ought to be kicked," said the skipper, "kicked all around the island. I hustled the schooner away before her ballast was properly stowed, and then got drunk like a fool. But I suffered, and—and I'll not dope a better man than myself in a hurry again."

But Frenchy was asleep already.



The Fracas at Black Grift's

by
**Joseph
Mills
Hanson**

QUT in Cottonwood Flat it is still a topic of conversation, though it happened years ago when that part of Dakota was much less thickly peopled and much more given to the vigorous methods of immaturity than it is to-day. I heard the details a year or so ago, when I was in that country visiting and, incidentally, hunting prairie chickens. I should not have heard them then had I not chanced one day to go into town after a supply of shells unaccompanied by the gentleman at whose big cattle-ranch I was a guest.

The subject is not brought up by others in his presence and he never mentions it himself. Apparently it is distasteful to him, and, though he is a public man and one of the most popular in all the range country, I find that he bears the reputation of being a poor person to irritate. Several times in the past he has been irritated and people now seem to remember the occasions and avoid the practise.

On the pine-board porch of the "New York Store" where dry-goods, groceries,

books, shoes, hardware, and notions are dispensed to the sparse population of Cottonwood Flat and environs I encountered, after purchasing my shells, an individual sitting cross-legged on a nail-keg, meditatively squirting tobacco-juice at a knot-hole in the floor. He wore a long, drooping, gray mustache and eyed me disapprovingly from beneath bushy brows, for I was in conventional Eastern hunting dress. Nevertheless, I passed the time of day with him and then he asked:

"Huntin' chickuns?"

"Yes."

"Gettin' many?"

"Quite a few."

"Whereabouts?"

"Up Ripple Creek."

"Oh!"

He regarded me with more interest and less disdain, evidently knowing at once my stopping-place, if not my identity. With a distinct increase of cordiality, he began speaking of the chicken situation in past years, warming to his subject as he progressed, and found me an appreciative lis-

tener. At length, in concluding one of his statements, he made use of a phrase which aroused my curiosity:

"That was the Fall after the fracas in Black Griff's place."

"When was that?" I asked.

"Twenty-some years back."

"What happened?"

He gazed at me in mild surprise and shifted his quid.

"Didn't you never hear of that row before?" he inquired.

With a sense of humility, I confessed my ignorance.

"Well, that's funny, an' you visitin' with *him*, too. But it's like him; never was much of a hand to let on about his doin's, even when he was younger an' friskier. An' sence he's made his pile an' taken to livin' up amongst 'em, he's worse'n ever. But here's the way that round-up showed, if you want to hear about it."

I assented eagerly, for I had a whole morning on my hands with nothing to do except get back to the ranch in time for noonday dinner; a trip easily performed in an hour by the nimble-footed team which, harnessed to a light buckboard, stood awaiting my pleasure before the store. So my new acquaintance cut himself a generous slice of tobacco from the twist in his pocket, settled back on his nail-keg, and began:

LONG back a couple years before that, one mornin' a feller hit these parts that went by the name o' Waldo Griffingham. That's a reg'lar down-East name, ain't it? But don't take it fer a sign that he was a tenderfoot, nor green. He wasn't. Most likely he'd picked that name up some time when he was mighty sollicitous to lose himself from the circles he'd been movin' in. Long an' short of it, he was a gambler an' knew his profession thorough. But that didn't make him no curiosity around here.

Cottonwood Flat in them days wasn't much but gamblin'-halls an' thirst-places. There weren't no fences around then; we ranged the big herds all over the prairies an' when the boys struck one o' the bunches o' shacks that stood around over the country about sixty miles apart an' passed fer towns, that was all we wanted, mostly; a table to burn money on an' plenty o' raw, red forty-rod. An' it took a mighty ca'm, collected card-shuffler, too, on the other side

o' the board, to persuade our money out of us graceful, without percipitatin' a misundersandin'. Quite a few come along that didn't comprehend quite well enough how to take an' handle the cattle-puncher nater, an' that's how the Cottonwood Flat Cemetery Association come to get started, which same is still runnin' in a flourishin' condition.

But this feller Griffingham didn't seem to be one o' the onskilful kind. He took a-hold with a firm hand an', as the Scriptor says, "flourished like a green bay tree." It didn't take him long till he'd cleaned up enough to start a place of his own, an' he done it right. He built a two-story frame with a bar an' gamblin'-room in the first floor, all fixed up with mirrors an' Chinese lanterns hangin' around the ceilin' an' some blue an' red glass over the door.

He had artistic notions, that feller did, an' he called his place "The Oriental Val-halla;" what in thunder that means I'm blamed if I know nor I don't believe he did, neither. Anyway, it got mighty popular an' he just pulled in the coin like he was rakin' leaves—an' as indifferent. He had roulette an' faro an' chuck-a-luck all goin', an' occasional he took a hand in a poker game. Oh, say! when I get to thinkin' back about his poker, I just sigh an' wonder. It was enough to make old Hoyle turn over in his grave with envy—beautiful, sir, beautiful!

But, by jim, he was a cold-blooded codfish, that gent was! Wrap an icicle around your neck fer a tippet on a blizzardy day an' you'd feel like you was havin' fever when you looked into them black eyes o' his'n. You bet not a dollar ever got back into the pockets of a puncher that was buckin' the game if the wheel didn't sure enough throw it that way. Black Griff spotted 'em every time. That was what we called him fer short; his name was too big a mouthful when we was all busy, an', besides, the other harmonized. He *was* black, black all over, inside an' out; black hair, black eyes, big black whiskers, skin as black as a white man's could be, an' his mental make-up blacker'n all the rest, I reckon.

I used to wonder how the jumpin' Jehoshaphat any woman could stand livin' around with any such a human dungeon. Fer that was the queerest thing about him; he had a wife. Yes, sir, a wife! She lived up in the second story; that was what he built it fer,

to live in. To be sure, nobody hardly ever seen her. But she was there all right an', from the few sights folks ever had of her, a youngish woman an' pretty good-lookin', though tired an' scared-like, which ain't to be wondered at, fer we often used t' hear him roarin' at her up above there when there wasn't no playin' goin' on at the wheels an' he was "off duty," so to say. It was funny fer him to have a wife, bein' as he was the lowest kind o' gambler, an' women—that is, decent women—was about as scarce as plug hats in Cottonwood Flat them days. There wasn't above two er three more besides her.

They had a child, too, cute little chap about ten er 'leven, I reckon, an' small for his age, with long, curly hair an' dimples. It was a sight that made you feel good to see him laugh; seemed to come from 'way inside an' we used to try to make him, sometimes. But he didn't, very often. He took things mighty serious fer a kid, an' when I've thought of him in years since, I can't help sort o' chokin'; he must 'a' had a devil of a life, poor little feller! Black Griff had taught him to do a lot o' fancy dances, so's't he'd be an added attraction to the "Oriental Valhalla;" an' he had various sort o' clothes he'd put on him fer the different ones.

Then he'd set the little chap up on the bar along after the crowd got good an' hilarious an' somebody'd hit up a tune on the fiddle an' off he'd prance, whether he wanted er not. If he didn't do it right, Black Griff'd cuss him. I've seen him sometimes when he looked so sick an' worn-out that I most wanted to blubber, watchin' him caper around. An' I guess others o' the boys felt the same. But we was young an' ashamed of our feelin's in them days, an' nobody had the nerve to get up an' kick about it fer fear o' bein' laughed at. So he danced, night after night, an' when he wasn't doin' that he was runnin' around fillin' fellers' glasses till two an' three in the mornin'; you can figger what a edifyin' atmosphere that was fer a little tad to be growin' up in, around a bar-room with a lot o' drunken cow-boys. I wonder his mother didn't go plumb mad!



ALWAYS, when some shootin' would start, as it did now an' then, she'd come runnin' down-stairs an' open the door a crack an' we'd see her face, all white an' scared, an' hear her call,

"Teddy! Teddy!" That was the little boy's name. But generally just seein' her would stop the fracas, fer she was a decent woman. Lord, man, you fellers back East don't know what that means to a chap out in a wild country. She's somethin' more'n human; she's a sermon an' a altar an' the things a feller thinks of when he remembers his mother, all rolled in one.

Well, Black Griff, he went on an' growed an' prospered fer a couple a years er so an' then, finally, one Spring, with the new bunch o' cow-boys that showed up in the country fer the season's herdin', come a feller from Texas, by the name o' Steve Warley. That was all we knowed about him at first; he said he'd come from Texas, where he'd been herdin', an' he didn't tell nothin' further concernin' himself. He was some older than the average feller that's just started in the cow-boy business; a quiet chap an' that self-possessed!

If we had any notion at the beginnin' that he maybe hadn't herded much, we got over it right expeditious, fer he sure knew how to rope a steer an' ride a broncho. An' while he was quiet an' didn't talk much, he wasn't grouchy er anything like that. When it come to accomodat' another feller er helpin' him with his work, er doin' anything else that was nice an' decent, Steve was right there. He'd even sing a song, or cut a caper, or tell a story when we got stretched out around the camp-fire at night, so the boys liked him fine all around. But you could always see there was somethin' back of it all—somethin' he was thinkin' about.

Him an' me sort o' took to bunkin' up together, an' at last, one night, when we'd got off from the outfit, chasin' a bunch o' strays an' had to camp on the prairie, he part way opened his mind to me. It seemed from what he said that about twelve years before, when he was a young feller back in Iowa, he'd been in love with a girl there, an' she seemed to be pretty partial to him until another chap, stranger in the country, come along an' got to loafin' 'round her an', one day, mighty sudden, she up an' run away with him. Her folks was good 'n' mad an' they disowned her an' Steve hadn't heard of her since, so there was no knowin' what had become of her.

But the queer thing was the way it stuck in Steve's mind; folks at that age most usually get over such things quick. But he'd took a notion that the feller she'd run away

with was a bad lot generally—an' idee that occurs right frequent to the chap that's left, I've noticed. An' he couldn't seem to forget her, the thing had sort of ingrown on him. He left home an' fer about six years, accordin' to his tell, he'd led the devil a close chase fer the honors in general cussedness.

I didn't belive it, fer Steve wasn't put up on that plan, but that was what he claimed. Then, at the end o' them six years, bein' clean down at the bottom of everything, he concluded to take a brace an' try to make something of himself. He'd started down in Texas an' punched fer quite a while at low-water wages, but he'd saved his money till he had quite a little wad an' concluded to come up to Dakota, lookin' fer a location to start in the cattle business fer himself. That was how he come to land in around our range an' he was keepin' on ridin' till he found a good openin'.

 IT APPEARED to do him good to talk, so I sympathized all I could, but I didn't think overly much about it an' the main thing that struck me was the way he'd kept that girl in mind all these years; seemed pretty tolerable steadfast, considerin' he was such a well-favored chap an' must 'a' had plenty o' other chances. Anyhow, after that we sort of stuck together more'n ever an' along about June, some time, just after pay-day, a bunch of us took a night off an' rode into Cottonwood Flat here fer a blow-out, an' I got my persuasiveness busy an' worked Steve into comin' along. He wasn't much of a hand fer that sort o' thing, but he took his end up all right an' cashed in fer the fire-water when it come his turn. We dropped into one or two places till we got to feelin' pretty spirited, an' then drifted 'round to the "Oriental Valhalla" fer to sow the rest of our coin in real elegant surroundin's.

When we strolled in, there was mebbe ten or a dozen other fellers loafin' 'round an' Black Griff behind the bar, a-servin' up drinks. We come front an' called fer straights, an' while Griff was fetchin' out the bottles he didn't look. But it was Steve's turn, an' when he slapped the coin down on the bar, Griff looked up, square at him. I swear, if ever a man turned around an' caught a ghost grinnin' over his shoulder, I'll bet he didn't look much different from Griff. What part of his skin I could see through them whiskers just turned sort

o' pale green, his eyes popped wide open, an' he staggered a little an' grabbed the counter!

Then he pulled himself together an' reached fer the money with a hand that shook like he had a chill. I was seein' kind o' hazy about then an' couldn't figger what ailed the man. I looked at Steve, but he'd poured himself about a finger o' liquor an' was turnin' the glass around watchin' the light in it an' didn't appear to have noticed anything, so I let it slide. I wasn't out lookin' fer mysteries that night.

Everything went along lovely then fer a while. Griff come back to himself all right an' didn't appear to notice Steve any more, an' we was losin' our money, nice an' regular, buckin' the various burglar-kits around the joint, when along about midnight some wabble-jointed genius got a inspiration an' hollered fer to bring on Teddy an' have a dance. Black Griff didn't seem to take kind to the idee, somehow. I never seen him hesitate before on account o' the kid's feelin's, but he did then. Said Teddy hadn't been feelin' well an' had gone to bed. 'Course that made some of the fellers, who didn't know just what they was doin', anyhow, worse'n ever. They kept hollerin' fer Teddy until Griff cut out an' went up-stairs an' got him.

When he come in, I could see plain that Teddy was punier'n usual. His face was drawn an' pale an' he didn't look as though he'd been asleep. Griff had togged him out in a little white coat an' pants an' shoes, with a pointed white cap on his head, an' on the shoes an' tip o' the cap an' down the front o' the coat was big, round, black buttons. He sure was cute in the outfit, with his yellor hair curlin' 'round his face, if he hadn't looked so sick an' lifeless. But we all yelled when we seen him, an' Flint Wyatt, from the Skinned Dog Butte outfit, over in Coulson County, grabbed the fiddle an' started off a jig as Griff h'isted the kid up on the bar.

"Well, he tried to dance, but a blind owl could see it was a tough job fer him. We was 'shamed, as usual, to say we didn't enjoy it, till all at once Teddy stumbled an' would 'a' fallen off the bar on to the floor if somebody hadn't took a jump about six feet long right from one of the tables an' caught him just as he was goin' over. It was Steve Warley. Black Griff stepped over an' his voice was just shakin'.

"— you!" he says, "what do you

mean, fallin' 'round like that? Go on!" An' he hauled off to give Teddy a cuff as he hung on to Steve's shoulder.

But Teddy never got it. Steve's arm went out like a piece of spring steel an' Black Griff toppled back ag'in' the bar, both his arms spread over it, an' gaspin'. Steve just stood there with his little brown mustache sort o' bristlin' an' his eyes, half shut, lookin' out under the edge o' his sombrero into the other feller's face. I'll tell you we set up straight an' fixed our holsters, fer there was music in the air.

"You'll pay fer this!" says Griff, lurchin' up to his feet an' reachin' fer his gun.

"I think not," says Steve, just as quiet as a breeze. "I think the drinks are on you, Mr. Griffingham."

"Don't mister me!" yells Griff, gettin' madder every minute, an' shakier. "I'll bore you full o' holes, you silk-socked, sugar-an'-water Newport dude!"

"There won't be any shootin' here to-night," says Steve, "unless you force it. An' I hardly believe you will."

"He's my kid," says Griff. "I guess I can do what I like with him."

"Until it comes to brutality, yes," Steve answers back. "But you're not going to make this little chap dance when he's sick; not while I'm around. And I think the boys will agree with me!"

There was no discount on that. We was behind him to a man, because he'd had the git-up to speak out our feelin's, an' Griff seen it an' give up as graceful as he could, tryin' to laugh it off. We all had another round an' then Steve went off in a corner an' sat fer half an hour with Teddy on his lap, talkin' an' chatterin' in a way I never seen the other fellers do. The kid just seemed to wake up all over, an' more'n once he laughed out, clean an' happy, like he'd forgot all about the way he generally got treated. Him an' Steve sure seemed to understand each other first-rate.



NOTHIN' more happened that night, but after that Steve managed to drop around into Cottonwood Flat quite frequent. Black Griff didn't like to see him, anybody could tumble to that. But Steve was popular with the boys an' Griff didn't have no call to say anything. Steve always got hold o' Teddy an' talked to him an' played with him. He took to bringin' the boy little things that he

thought might please him, pretty stones he'd pick up on the prairie an' such like stuff. Teddy got so he'd near have a fit, nights when Steve come. The boy'd run out an' jump into his arms 'fore he could get inside the door. He always called him Steve, too. Reckon he'd never heard his other name. I used to wonder how it was Steve took such a shine to the youngster, an' one time when I was thinkin' about it, he up an' spoke my thoughts right out in his way, so sudden I was scared. Then he went on to say, says he:

"I tell you, Bob, the boy makes me feel queer. He hurts me and pleases me, both at once. There's some things about him, a mighty lot of things, too, I can't understand. But, Bob, he just always and forever keeps reminding me of her!"

After that, I didn't wonder any more why he liked Teddy. I'd concluded a long while before that that girl he used to have back in Iowa must 'a' been seventeen different kinds of assorted fool to run off with another feller. But then, there ain't no accountin' fer women's tastes. They're like puppies, that way; apt to pick up any old thing an' think it'll do to love an' cherish, even if 'tain't worth shucks.

Well, things run along till pretty well into Fall, an' at last we drove a big bunch o' beef 'cross country to the railroad fer shipment East, an' come back a-ridin' easy an' lookin' fer fun. An' feelin' that way we come, six er eight of us, into Cottonwood Flat one evenin'. I remember well it was a fine evenin', an' as we poked along through the dust about twilight the air was smellin' spicy with the smoke o' prairie fires away off, an' up northward we could see the glare o' one o' them, kinder faint an' yellor, like moon-rise, hangin' ag'in the handle o' the Big Dipper.

Steve an' I was ridin' together, our ponies loafin' along, an' 'fore we come into the Flat here, he was tellin' me that durin' the Summer he'd spotted about the sort o' location he wanted, up here in the hills a piece, an' had been inquiren' about it at the Government Land Office while he was in the railroad town. He'd found he could get it OK an' was goin' to stake an' build an' start out fer himself in the Spring. An' what do you think? He wanted me to come along an' run the cow-boy end o' the enterprise fer him!

Just about then we struck the first saloon

an' we all went in, o' course, an' it was full dark time we moseyed along to the "Oriental Valhalla." We found a few fellers layin' around, but things wasn't very lively till we come an' put some ginger into 'em. We was all feelin' mighty good-natured, an' we started the faro game an' kept that up a while, then some of us dropped out an' took a table an' started a poker game.

Steve never went in fer them things much, but Teddy didn't seem to be around, an' so, when we kept a-pressin' him to sit in an' make the game more interestin', he finally gave up an' joined us. He hadn't much more'n got started when the door opened an' in come Teddy. He run fer Steve, o' course, but Steve was into the game an' couldn't get out very graceful, so he pulled a chair up alongside an' told Teddy to sit there, which he done, very nice an' peaceable.

Black Griff, so it seemed, was feelin' pleasant, fer him, that night, but I thought, private, that he was schemin' on somethin', he was so polite an' smooth. After a while he come over himself, an' took a place at the table, an' ordered Teddy up to keep the glasses filled, not a hard job then, fer nobody wanted nothing but old rye with the edges tucked in. Everybody sat up when Black Griff joined the game, fer he didn't often, an' we knew we'd got to look sharp, or things would get mysterious.

 IT ALL went smooth fer quite a bit, nobody much loser or winner.

Then come a jackpot, an' the deal went clear around till the pile got pretty tolerable high, an' it come Griff's turn to deal. He spread the cards, somebody drew openers, we discarded, filled, an' everybody dropped out but me, Griff, an' Fatty Fessenden, of our outfit. I raised her, so did Griff, an' Fatty saw us an' called. He laid down two pair, kings high, if I recollect; I follered with a full house, an' Griff, very sober, slid out on to the table, one after another, four of a kind—sevens! There was dead silence fer a minute, an' Griff reached fer the pile, when all at once, Steve says, soft an' easy:

"That was careless of you, Griff. The seven of spades was in my hand!"

Black Griff's mouth twisted into a grin fer just about a tenth of a second, then he answers back, just as gentle:

"You're mistaken. It come to me in the deal."

That was too much fer Fatty. He reached across the table, an' flipped over Steve's cards, face up, where everybody could see 'em. There laid a bob-tail straight, with the seven o' spades at one end!

"Where'd *you* get that seven?" says Griff, sneerin'. "Come to *you* in the deal, I s'pose?"

"You bet, if Steve's got it, it did!" yells Fatty, too mad to be sensible. "Now account fer *yours*, you black-whiskered thimble-rigger!"

Griff jumped out o' his chair.

"You fellers accusin' me o' cheatin'?" he roars. "There don't no man do that more'n once!"

An' up come the p'int of his gun, straight fer Steve's chest.

Steve an' Fatty was both on their feet with their guns out, but in that same second there was a streak o' white sailin' through the air that stopped plumb in front o' Steve, then jumped up an' grabbed him around the neck, an' Teddy's little, shrill voice screamed out:

"Don't shoot him, papa; don't! He's good. Oh, papa!"

Two pistol shots cracked out together, Black Griff's an' Fatty Fessenden's. Just two. Fer a minute afterward, Griff stood like a post, then his gun thumped on to the floor, he threw his arms up, turned half-round, an' pitched over on his face, dead as a picket-pin! An' then we looked at Steve. He was standin' as if he was paralyzed, with Teddy clutched in his arms an' his eyes just glued to the little chap's face. On the breast o' Teddy's shirt was a spot o' red, that was gettin' bigger an' bigger. The shot Black Griff had aimed fer Steve's heart had killed his own boy!

Well, sir, it was just too awful to think of. We stayed where we happened to be, doin' just nothin' 'cause we couldn't, an' while we stood there, with the pistol smoke curlin' up to the ceilin', in the dead quiet, we heard some one runnin' down the stairs. Then the door flew open an' Mrs. Griffingham, with her hair loose an' fallin' over her shoulders, come rushin' clear into the bar-room, callin' like she was half mad with fright:

"Teddy, darling! Ted——" an' stopped.

Sir, fer a minute you could 'a' heard a horse stamp a block away, it was that still. There was Steve in the middle o' the room with the poor little kid in his arms, an' the

curly, yeller hair hangin' to his shoulder, an' there was Mrs. Griffingham, stopped short in her tracks, lookin' at each other across the body of her dead baby as if they was seein' spirits. At last Steve fetched a sort o' wheeze an' spoke:

"Lord Gawd!" he says, slow an' distinct, "Mary!"

That was all. Mrs. Griffingham didn't say a word. She just stepped over to him, slow an' glidin', like she was in a dream, gathered Teddy in her arms, an' without lookin' once at Griff's body, layin' there ag'in' the bar, turned around an' walked to the stairs an' up an' out o' sight!



I DON'T know how long we'd 'a' stood there, like a bunch o' wooden Injuns, if Steve, poor cuss, hadn't come to his senses at last. He told us to pick up Black Griff an' lay him out on a table, an' put a cloth over him. We minded like a kindergarten. Then he went out an' roused up the store-keeper an' got his wife an' daughter to come over to Mrs. Griffingham.

We all stayed until the next day an' in the afternoon there was a double funeral an' we laid away Teddy an' Black Griff, side by side in the graveyard. That was what Mrs. Griffingham wanted, so we done it. I reckon she never got over it. A woman can't, a thing like that. But after a while she got some reconciled. For about a year she lived at the store-keeper's. Then she started a hotel an' kept it somethin' like another year. An' then she quit that, fer good.

THE narrator ceased speaking and rose from the nail-keg, stretching comfortably.

"Well," said I slowly, "I'm glad to have heard that. It accounts for several things."

My acquaintance went to the corner of the porch, and began tightening the saddle cinches on the sorrel pony which stood there, half asleep in the shade.

"Thought mebbe you'd be interested," said he. "The Senator won't never talk about it. I reckon lots o' folks that visit up Ripple Creek wonder who that curly-headed little feller is, in the picter hangin' over the pianner in the parlor. Don't you think young Mary looks like him?"

"Well," I returned, somewhat startled, "he certainly is a handsome boy."

The other eyed me keenly.

"Young man," said he, "you're out from Washin'ton huntin' prairie chickuns?"

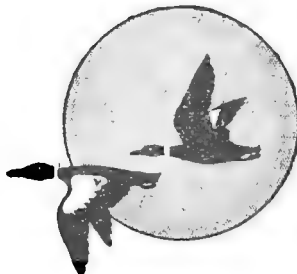
"I am," I replied lamely.

"I swan!" he ejaculated. Then, mounting his horse, he leaned over and adjusted the throat-latch, murmuring ruminatively, "Beats all how valuable our Dakota prairie chickuns be."

"Just one thing more," I exclaimed, hastily interrupting this trend of speech. "Did you accept the offer of a job which was made you that evening when you were riding into Cottonwood Flat?"

"Say," he answered, looking down at me with a whimsical smile, "do I look easy enough to pass up the first decent chance ever come my way? Next time you're out huntin' chickuns on horseback er in the phaeton, just ask the party you're huntin' with to bring you round to her Uncle Bob's. Nora an' I are runnin' the upper ranch now, where the herd corrals. That's why we ain't been down to the house since you come to these parts.

"Have her bring you an' we'll give you as good a dinner as the outfit can dish up. An' I'll tell you, young man," he concluded, "there's some fine views from the hills around there, up an' down the valley; fine views fer chickun hunters—yes, sree!"





Versus The Bank of England An Episode in the Career of a Gentleman of Fortune

by Max Rittenberg

THE Bank of England would make a highly interesting opponent," remarked John Hallard (alias Sir Ralph Kenrick at this period of his daredevil career).

Renie (alias Lady Kenrick) laughed good-humoredly at her husband's supposed pleasantry.

"Here's an article on a visit to the Bank of England," pursued Hallard, referring to a popular magazine he was reading. "It appears that the bank has two little stock jokes which it trots out for every visitor. The stage setting for one of them is the gold vault. You find yourself surrounded by untold millions of wealth in the form of gold ingots weighing about a quarter-ton apiece, and the bank official remarks jocosely that you are at perfect liberty to walk off with any amount of gold you please, and nobody will stop you. You try to lift a gold-bar, and then the laugh is on you. The other joke takes place in the bank-note room. They put a million-pound note into your hands, and tell you you're now a millionaire. Then they all smile at you for the second time."

"It sounds very feeble."

"It sounds exactly the kind of joke which would be evolved at a board meeting by the Worshipful Governors; proposed, seconded and duly recorded in the minutes, and then issued for general consumption among the staff."

Something in John Hallard's ironic tone caught at Renie sharply.

"Surely you're not seriously thinking of working the bank?" she asked with wide-eyed concern.

"I am."

"Sheer madness! I know you don't think much of bank directors, but this is utterly different. The Bank of England! Why, every one knows the biggest financial men in London crowd one another for the honor of being on the board. All the richest, solidest, shrewdest——"

"Shrewdest" is the very loophole," interrupted Hallard. "You know I can't work against the ordinary, simple-minded, straight-thoughted fellow. My style of poker-play only pays when the others at the table are the deep, wise ones. Now I've got the germ of an idea that looks good on the surface. I propose to pay a visit to the Bank of England and see if this maga-

zine writer has set out things as they actually are."

"Don't do it, *chéri!*" pleaded Renie.

John Hallard pressed her hand.

"I won't if you say no. Let me see how things lie, and then I'll put the scheme up to you to pass on."

"We've done very well the last twelve months. Can't we stand out this deal?"

"That's the very reason for standing in. Luck's with us at present. Always run your lucky streak to the far end." Like most "gentlemen of fortune," John Hallard was permeated with the superstition of luck. If he felt in his innermost being that It was against him, he would call off from the most fair-seeming *coup*. But let him have the subtle intuition that It was with him, and there were absolutely no limits to his daredeviltry.

"We've made a clear six thousand over the Eames necklace," pursued Hallard. "I feel very much like putting that up as an ante. Let me see how things lie, dear."

Renie knew that her husband's promise to give her the veto on the final scheme would not be broken. She assented.



A FEW days later, armed with an introduction from his bankers, "Sir Ralph Kenrick," a dilettante young man of fashion, was presenting credentials at the squat stone building in the heart of the city that controls the finance of a world-wide empire and sends out nerve-threads into every bourse in Europe and the Americas.

When the Governors of the Bank of England meet to settle the London Bank Rate, every jobber in Consols stands on his toes like a sprinter in a hundred-yard race waiting for the starting-pistol; every finance house is eagerly ready to scalp a few precious centimes or pennings off the international exchanges.

The Bank of England is the nerve-ganglion of international finance.

Hallard had previously made an examination of the exterior. The bank is practically a citadel inside a square rampart wall—a wall with blank windows and columned supports and floriated balustrades to give a fictitious superficial impression of the sides of a building, but in reality a rampart wall pregnable only to artillery or high explosives. There are four narrow entrances giving north, south, east and west, on Loth-

bury, Threadneedle Street, Bartholomew Lane and Princes Street, the rest is solid wall two stories high.

If any gold notes or other document spelling money were to be taken from out the Bank of England, it must apparently be through one of these four entrances. In the daytime each of course has its uniformed watchman; at night-time the four entrances are closed with iron gates, and a squad of soldiers mounts guard inside the citadel.

Sir Ralph Kenrick's visit had been arranged by letter a couple of days before, on his bankers' introduction, and he was now presenting credentials at the Threadneedle Street entrance. In outward appearance a young man of foppish affectation, with a monocle and a politely vacuous smile, Sir Ralph made a curious contrast to the old-world beadle who conducted him from department to department. The beadle, in his large Napoleon hat and his gown of somber red slashed with black velvet, represented the dignity and the solidity of the great institution where he played his humble part. Sir Ralph represented gilded leisure, ephemeral fancy, idle whim.

The visitor was taken the usual round of the counting-houses, vaults, note depositories and postal-order printing works. He said "Aw, very interestin'," to mostly everything; took the million-pound bank-note into his hands for the usual few moments; attempted to raise a quarter-ton gold ingot down in the steel-lined vaults.

But behind the monocle and the vacuous smile John Hallard was storing up swiftly and with all his powers of concentration the tiny details that were to serve him in his self-arranged duel versus the Bank of England.

II



WHEN the full scheme was laid before Renie, she reluctantly consented to sanction it and to play her part. But her eyes were clouded with anxiety, in spite of her husband's overwhelming optimism.

Some few days were consumed in preparation, including a visit to his own bankers, where he deposited a sealed packet, and then John Hallard opened the game by appearing at the head office of a famous travel agency in the guise of an American tourist just landed in London.

You may perhaps know that London has a popular conventional idea of what the American tourist ought to be. He (the imaginary one) wears a slouch hat, an impossible check suit and a goatee beard; his front name is Cyrus K., his back name is Vansomethingorother; he has made his money packing pork and beans in Chicago; he says "I guess" every second sentence; "mighty slick" is his adjective of eulogy; "hell!" is what he fills in gaps of tea-table conversation with; his conduct is highly eccentric and explosive, and he "does" England, Scotland and Wales in their entirety in three days.

Without going to that extreme length, John Hallard measured up very fairly to the character of a rich, stout, hustling American tourist, particularly in the matter of "doing the sights."

"I want a courier," he told the agency, "to take me round London, Devonshire, Stratford-on-Avon, Chester and the Dukeries in four days. I want to see Buckingham Palace, the Empire Vaudeville Theatre, the Tower of London, Madame Tussaud's, the House of Lords, Nelson's Statue, Pierpont Morgan's office, the Bank of England——"

"One moment, sir. We shall have to obtain you special permission for a visit to the Bank of England."

"Can you get it by lunch-time?"

The manager looked horrified.

"We can get it in two days' time, sir, not before!"

"Very well, I'll do England first and London when I get back. When's the next train to Devonshire?"

The name Hallard had selected for the part of the American tourist was "Mr. Randall Kingsmith." The initials "R. K." allowed him to use Sir Ralph Kenrick's marked toilet necessities, and were convenient in many small ways. The courier that went with him was a weedy little Swiss who had just left off being a schoolmaster. In the course of their lightning tour round England, the little Swiss became seriously concerned about his employer's sanity.

American tourists were all eccentric, he knew, but this big stout man was going beyond the limits of eccentricity. He quarreled violently with a railway guard over an odd threepence for a luncheon basket, and he tipped a five-pound note to a picture-post-card seller at Stratford because he said

that the man reminded him of poor old King Lear. At Chester he bought a string of twelve live Cheshire cats, and at the Dukeries he bought twelve potted palms—for the purpose, he explained, of giving them roosting-places—and a white mouse to keep them company.

However, this Mr. Kingsmith was very generous to his courier, tipping him with odd sums of money at all sorts of unexpected moments. As for instance, 17s. 3d. on sitting down in Shakespeare's chair at Stratford, and 1s. 6d. on getting up again; 8s. on catching first sight of Sheffield's pall of smoke, and £1 6s. 4d. on losing an umbrella. When the little Swiss had mentioned to Mr. Kingsmith that he had left his own umbrella in the train at St. Pancras, the stout American had turned up his loose cash and solemnly counted out £1 6s. 4d., "to buy yourself a new one with a bright red handle."

Consequently, the little Swiss made no complaint of Mr. Kingsmith's eccentricities to the travel agency. Allured by the prospect of still more reasonless tips, he gladly accompanied him round London. If his employer tipped 17s. 3d. for sitting in Shakespeare's chair, what might he not hand over for wiping boots on the mat of Pierpont Morgan's office? Or for standing before a wax statue of "Peter the Painter" at Madame Tussaud's?

III



AT TEN o'clock on the morning of the prearranged visit to the Bank of England, Mr. Kingsmith sent off a brief and cryptic telegram to Renie at their private house. It ran to three words only:

Let her rip.

Then he proceeded to Threadneedle Street, accompanied by the Swiss courier and the white mouse, the latter being in the side pocket of his coat. Mr. Kingsmith, looking stouter than ever, seemed to be curiously sobered by the grave solemnity of the Bank of England. He made no unusual demonstration as they went from department to department, and it was not until they had arrived at the gold vaults that he broke away from the conventional with startling suddenness.

There were four of them in the steel-lined

vault: Mr. Kingsmith, the courier, an elderly official of the bullion department named Satterley, and a muscular watchman who had seen service in India and in the Sudan and wore a string of medals over his bank uniform.

Said Mr. Satterley with ponderous jocosity, pointing to the ingots lying around:

"This is where we keep all the spare gold we don't want. Our scrap-heap, so to speak. We allow our visitors to take away as much of the gold as they can carry, without hindrance. Would you like, sir, to take away a bar or two as a little memento of your visit?"

"I would," answered Mr. Kingsmith.

"Pray help yourself," continued Mr. Satterley, his eyes wrinkling to the coming fun of seeing another foolish visitor trying to carry away a quarter-ton ingot.

"I will," answered Mr. Kingsmith.

Then things happened quickly. Before the others could realize what was being done, the visitor had struck a match and was applying it to a thin, amber-colored stick of material he had taken out from his waistcoat pocket.

"Cordite, by God!" cried the soldier-watchman.

"I'm packed tight with cordite, dynamite and lyddite!" snapped John Hallard. "Coat, waistcoat, trousers and hat! That's how I'm going to lift the gold!"

The little Swiss courier uttered a piercing shriek and fled wildly to the upper regions. Striking out blindly at the clerks who tried to stop him, he rushed into the courtyard and out toward the Lothbury gate of the citadel. Here he was neatly tripped up by a gateman.

"Let me go!" shrieked the Swiss. "He vill blow us all sky-high! Let me go, for the love of heaven!"

The gateman hauled him by the scruff of the neck back to the bullion department.

Down below, Mr. Satterley had shrunk back, white-faced, to the open door, but the watchman, with a pluck that deserved big reward, advanced to seize this dynamite-loaded madman.

"Keep away!" shouted John Hallard fiercely.

He had taken out a dynamite blasting cartridge from a coat pocket and was holding it near to the sizzling cordite in his other hand.

The watchman whipped out a revolver.

and brought it to the ready, but John Hallard's words slashed down through his resolve:

"I tell you I'm packed tight with high explosives! If you fire into me, you send every man in this building to perdition!"

The old soldier knew well that naked cordite burns harmlessly, but packed cordite or dynamite was a very different matter. As he hesitated and looked toward his superior at the doorway, Mr. Satterley beckoned to him wildly. With a jump of understanding he made for the door and clanged it to.

John Hallard was alone in the steel-lined vault with millions of virgin gold! The lights clicked out. He was left in utter darkness.

By the light of a match he saw that the time was ten after eleven.



IN A FAR corner of the citadel an anxious conference was taking place in the private room of the Deputy-Governor of the bank, Lord Lemington.

Mr. Satterley, the soldier-watchman, and the quivering little Swiss courier were arraigned before the desk of the grave-eyed, impassive man who had made a fortune in Lombard Street and had bought himself a title and wide estates.

"What are we to do, sir?" Mr. Satterley was asking, white-faced and helpless.

"Get the clerks quietly out of the bullion department. No fuss. Put them at work elsewhere," answered the man at the desk, almost without moving a muscle of his face.

"That I have already done, sir."

"He is mad, he is mad!" interrupted the trembling courier. "He buy twelve Cheshire cats at Chester! He buy twelve palms because he say for them to roost in! He give a fiver to a man who sell him a picture-post-card because he say he is like poor ol' King Lear! He shake hands with Peter the Painter and say, 'Proud to meet you, sir!' He tell me——"

The voice trailed away into nothingness as the cold gray eye of the Deputy-Governor gouged into him.

"Lock up this fellow in safe custody," ordered Lord Lemington. "Let him speak to no one until the affair is cleared up. Gag him for safety."

The watchman carried him out struggling and trying to shout through the muffle of a gag.

"What else, sir?" murmured the unfortunate Mr. Satterley, all the jocoseness of the bank-vault scene utterly squeezed out of his character.

"If anything happens," answered Lord Lemington significantly, "your resignation will be looked for immediately."

"But you don't think anything *will* happen, surely? If he sets light to the dynamite he will blow himself to fragments as well as the vault. Surely he ought to see that! If only somebody could point out to him how illogical——"

His voice died away under the cold gray eye of the Deputy-Governor, and there was silence until the watchman returned.

"Sergeant," said Lord Lemington, "has the man enough dynamite on him to wreck the vault?"

"I can't possibly say for certain, sir. He said he was packed tight with explosives. I saw cordite and blasting dynamite myself."

"In any case, even if the vaults are not wrecked, the explosion would be heard outside the walls?"

"Not a doubt of it, sir!"

"Then deliver this note I am writing to the Medical Officer of Health at the Guildhall. We must take strong measures at once."

When the watchman and Mr. Satterley had left the room, both stringently impressed with the necessity of keeping the affair secret from the outside world, Lord Lemington turned grimly to the telephone on his desk.

IV

 INSIDE the vault it was as silent as the grave. The roar of the city traffic was replaced by leaden stillness. The ticking of his watch sounded loud in Hallard's ears.

He had quickly satisfied himself that escape from the prison vault was humanly possible only in two ways. One was to have the ponderous steel door opened to him from the outside, the other was to blow down the door with high explosives.

But, curiously enough, he was not anxious to escape. He was content to sit still and let time work on his side. Having satisfied himself that there was no entrance into the vault beyond the door, he camped in a strategic position near the entrance and

proceeded to unearth from inside his waistcoat an electric torch, a compressed lunch and a roulette watch—that is, a watch where the face is in imitation of a roulette board and the hand is whizzed around by the touching of a spring.

After a leisured lunch he amused himself with a game of roulette against the Bank of England as an imaginary opponent—the bank being supposed to have a spare million pounds to gamble away. Tiring of that after an hour or so, he took out his white mouse and let it run about the floor of the vault. The game was to click out the electric torch and try to find the mouse in the dark. A game for sharp ears.

It was while listening to the patter of the mouse's feet that John Hallard suddenly awoke to the realization of what was being done on the outside of the vault. For some time he had been breathing with a certain difficulty, and now there came to him a faint sss-sss which sent him flying to the lock of the door.

They were trying to suck the air out of the vault!

This would at one and the same time render himself unconscious and any explosives harmless.

With his face close against the door, by the complex mechanism of the lock, he could feel the suction distinctly. At once he started to plug up with the tip of his silk handkerchief and moistened bread-crumbs.

If he had not heard the faint sound of the air sucking through the lock——



THE Medical Officer of Health and Mr. Satterley stood before Lord Lemington in the latter's private room at the far corner of the citadel. The Health Officer had not been told that there was a dynamite-loaded madman inside the vault, but merely a madman, else he might not so willingly have risked his life working the suction-pump at the vault door.

Said Mr. Satterley,

"I am afraid, sir, that he's plugged up the lock mechanism. We can't get any more air out."

"Then can you get any in?" asked Lord Lemington of the doctor.

"I don't see the point of that question."

"I want him asphyxiated," replied the Deputy-Governor in much the same tone as he would ask for a penny stamp.

"Poison him!" protested the doctor. "I

can take no part in that! Decidedly not!"

"No, not poison," answered Lord Lemington diplomatically. "Some gas which will incapacitate him temporarily."

"Carbonic oxid?"

"I leave that to you."

"Where can we pass it in? The lock mechanism is stopped up."

"There is a secret spy-hole to the vault from above." Mr. Satterley looked startled. "No, Mr. Satterley, it is not known to any one but the directors. On this one occasion only we will make use of it."

When the Health Officer had left to obtain the apparatus necessary for his task, the bank official asked a question of his chief:

"This ought to bring him to reason, sir, don't you think?"

Lord Lemington answered evenly,

"We will kill him first and reason with him afterward."



TIME dragged leaden-footed inside the vault. The first shadow of doubt began to creep into John Hallard's mind as to the wisdom of his reckless scheme. It was now past seven o'clock, and he had reckoned that long before then they would have opened the vault door to parley with him or entice him out on some pretext.

Were they going to leave him inside all night?

Were they going to leave him inside until gradually his breathing would exhaust the vital part of the air and slowly suffocate him?

He ought to have foreseen that move and arranged with Renie accordingly. As it was, his plans had overlooked that terrible possibility.

For a long time past the air had seemed curiously stale and hard to breathe—not in the fashion of the previous attempt on the vault, but in some new and strange manner which he could not account for. Was this the gradual using up of the vital air?

The sudden thought came to him: how is it affecting the white mouse? He clicked on the electric torch and searched around for the little fellow.

John Hallard found it—lying on its back, dead!

With a chill of horror he realized the truth—that poisonous gas was being passed into the closed vault to kill him off. And with the realization came instant resolve to action.

He must blow down the steel door of the vault!

There was no dynamite or lyddite on him, as he had bluffed Mr. Satterley and the others into believing, but only a few sticks of cordite. Naked cordite is harmless enough, but inside a rigid covering its explosive power is of course immense.

Into the mechanism of the lock John Hallard plugged all his available cordite. Whether it was too much or too little for the purpose, he had no means of judging. Whether it would shatter himself as well as the lock of the door was a matter of pure conjecture. The only certain point was that he could have no more than one attempt to force the lock, and with the gambler's instinct he played to the limit.

Breaking open the electric torch, he used the internals of it to form a fuse connection to the cordite. Then, backed into a far corner of the vault, he clenched his teeth as he waited for the explosion to take place.



AFTER the explosion they found John Hallard, stunned and bleeding from head wounds, minus his wig and facial disguise. They stripped him of his outer clothes with gingerly care, but no dynamite was to be found on him. Then, greatly wondering, Mr. Satterley had him carried before the Deputy-Governor in his private room.

"Leave him here with me," said Lord Lemington.

When John Hallard came to, he found himself lying on a couch facing an impassive man with a cold gray eye.

"So this is an attempt to rob the Bank of England?"

Hallard took in the situation in a flash. He rose slowly to a sitting posture, and it was with the languid drawl of Sir Ralph Kenrick, that he replied,

"Have you seen my eyeglass, old man?"

"This is no time for jesting," replied Lord Lemington sternly.

Hallard stared at him, and then began to chuckle to himself.

"Don't you see the joke now?" he asked.

"It was all spoof, you know—a little friendly bet with a fellow at the club. You remember the Mayor of Cambridge and the fellow who got himself up as the King of Abyssinia and had a regal time of it? Same sort of thing. Really, you don't mean to say you still take my spoof seriously?"

Lord Lemington's cold gray eye still gouged into him, but John Hallard reeled off his part like an actor born,

"Come, sir, don't look so serious about it! I admit the joke's on me now." He touched his battered face ruefully. "But if you have me arrested, who d'you think would look the silly ass in the mornin' papers—me or the Bank of England?"

Lord Lemington flinched involuntarily. Hallard had touched his one weak spot—fear of public ridicule.

"A likely story about the bet!" was his sharp comment.

John Hallard saw that his shaft had gone home, and there was a more deferential seriousness in his voice as he continued,

"I left a sealed packet with my bankers—Edwardes, Coldred & Co. You can see it in the morning. It explains the whole spoof. Of course you'll have me searched before I go, to make sure I'm not cartin' away any gold, and then we'll shake hands and cry quits. I pay the damages. Eh, what?"

"You mean that will be kept secret?"

"As long as you're on the board of the bank, sir, I'll say nothin'. Of course it's a good joke to keep to oneself, don't you know, but I'll promise you that."

"Young man," said Lord Lemington with the first trace of animation he had shown, "you will end your career either in the Cabinet or in prison!"

V



AFTER a thorough search of his clothes and person, and payment in full for the damage he had done to the door of the vault, they let John Hal-

lard go free the next morning. Apparently he had gained nothing by his reckless adventure—rather, lost money by it.

On the contrary, he and Renie cleared over twelve thousand pounds.

When she received the cryptic telegram to "Let her rip," Renie had at once sold short four hundred thousand pounds of Consols on the London Stock Exchange at a one-point margin, two hundred thousand pounds on the Paris Bourse at a half-point margin, and two hundred thousand pounds on the Berlin Bourse at a half-point margin.

Hallard had rightly gaged a banker's first thought in case of crisis; which is to shift the loss on to somebody else's shoulders. Confronted by the sudden crisis of a dynamite-loaded madman in the gold vaults of his bank, Lord Lemington had promptly telephoned to his brokers and thrown Bank of England stock and Consols on to the market.

In the course of the morning the Bank of England's mysterious sales drove Consols down from 90½ to 89¾, and when it was reported that Paris and Berlin were also selling, a war rumor set in and the highly sensitive stock fell to 89¼.

Renie closed her sales in the afternoon, and bought for the rise. The next day, after brokerage charges and other incidentals were subtracted, a clear twelve thousand six hundred pounds lay to her credit.

There are four entrances to the Bank of England, and any gold that leaves the place must go through one of them—apparently. But in this case the gold went out by a telephone wire, and it was Lord Lemington himself who ordered it out!





The Storming of Dargai by An English Army Officer

HIGHLANDERS! The General says that the position must be taken at all costs! The Gordons will take it! Forward, and follow me, my Highlanders!"

These burning and inspiring words were addressed to the old Ninety-second Regiment—the Gordon Highlanders—by their Colonel, gallant Mathias, on a scorching hot day of October, 1907, and were received by the men with a low murmur of determination which told of high and stern resolve. The position was the heights of Dargai.

Dargai is the gateway into the Tirah—a narrow, winding gateway, hacked out of a black mountain of stone by the devils who built that country. God surely never built it. It lies on the northwest frontier of India, and devils, too, inhabit it—big, muscular devils of a light olive color, with hooked noses, high cheekbones, and big black beards—the Afridi Pathans. Fiercer than Masai, craftier than American redskins, better shots than the Transvaal Boers, six thousand of them lay in wait there!

Ensnconced behind strongly constructed *sangars*, armed with the latest thing in quick-firing rifles, keyed up to concert pitch by their intense hatred of the British Government in India, they were there to stop the advance of a British army commanded by General Sir William Lockhart. For two days they had repulsed and hurled back with frightful slaughter brave Englishmen, Sikhs, and Ghoorkas.

It seemed impossible that anything with life could live before that murderous hail of lead, which mowed down advancing columns as a reaper mows down the ripened corn. Still, it was the key to the country beyond, and the only passage. It had to be taken at any cost.

Major-General Yeatman Biggs, who had received the order from General Lockhart, sent for Colonel Mathias.

"Mathias, old man," he told him, "Lockhart says that Dargai must be taken. It is a terrible task, and looks impossible, yet I know that you and the Gordons can do it!"

"Quite right, sir!" answered the Colonel, saluting; "the Gordons will take Dargai or——"

The sentence was left unfinished. There was no need to finish it, for everybody knew that none of that regiment would return unless the attack succeeded. It is a regiment with a reputation.

So eight hundred Highlanders—the flower of England's infantry and a regiment that had never been defeated—set out, a quivering, vibrant line of kilted Scotsmen, to do and conquer, where courageous thousands had already failed. For three minutes before they started the gunners under Brigadier-General Kempton kept up a sustained and murderous fire upon the hilltop with every single weapon of heavy ordnance they had—a fitting death-knell for the gallant Gordons, and a foretaste for the Afridi of what was coming.

"Commence fire!"

A single bugle-call rang out sweet and clear across the battle-ground, and *crash* came the thunder of the mountain batteries. In a second back came the answering crash, like the echo of damnation, as the shrapnel burst among the sea of white turbans and green, waving banners of the tribesmen.

"*Deen! Deen!*" was their answer—the Faith! the Faith!—the blood-hungry battle-cry that has meant for centuries unspeakable torture, ravage and rapine to those who heard it. They yelled it till it rose high and shrill above the noise of shrieking shrapnel!



THEN the guns grew mute again, suddenly, as though the finger of fate had struck them dumb; and again a bugle's notes rang sweetly through the quivering air—the joyous lilt of Syrens welcoming the doomed ones—the Gordons' requiem—the sweet, thrilling music of the "Charge!"

Dead silence followed. Then, martial, weird, fantastic, from behind a near-by hill rose the skirling of the bagpipes—the half-barbaric music that has called the Scotsmen for centuries where devils would fear to march. The waiting army thrilled to the skirl and lilt of Britain's oldest battle-tune, the "Cock o' the North," and round the bend of rising ground swung the Gordons' pipers, exercising their time-honored prerogative of leading the clan to death.

They were grown men, those pipers, men of thirty-five or forty years of age, hard, lean, muscular Scotsmen, sporranded and beribboned and immense. They were a fine mark for the Afridi tribesmen. But they stepped out—twenty-five of them—swinging from the hips as though parading in review order, and the time and tune of their death-chant was as steady as the tunes they play at Mess. There was not a tremor among them as they strode to the foot of the hill in the short British regulation quick-step.

There, where the gateway to the hinterland rose sharply in a zigzagging incline toward the summit, lay the mangled, bullet-riddled carcasses of men—face upward most of them. The foot of the pass was thick with them, twisted and bloody and gruesome, staring with wide-open eyes at a midday tropic sun. The Gordons, following their pipers, marched past General Yeatman Biggs as though he were reviewing them.

"Tshun!" roared Colonel Mathias.

"Eyes right!" ordered Major Forbes McBean, the senior major, and the eyes of the whole eight hundred turned sharply to the right, to the accompaniment of a click that could be heard a hundred yards away. The officers' swords came to the "Recover," and went through the motions of what seemed surely their last salute. "Fix bayonets!" sang Colonel Mathias.

The leading company had reached the gorge of death, and the fire-test of the Gordons had begun. Now a whole army would have a chance to see what reputation meant.

Like the ringing of a hammer on a blacksmith's anvil—one quick, short, silvery note—came the sound of locking-rings on rifle-barrels as the wicked little blades flashed upward and snapped home on the rifle ends. One short second then they waited, for the men to fill their lungs and tighten up their belts.

"Charge!" roared Colonel Mathias.

His voice rang like a trumpet-call, and he leaped into the hell of hailing lead like a youngster—in and up—sword upward—the oldest man there, and the bravest and the best-loved!

Company by company the Gordons followed him, bursting with a roar into the fire-zone, and, like the report of one big gun, one thousand Lee-Metford rifles spat out their hail of lead from above them—a well-directed, well-aimed inferno of dum-dum bullets. And on rushed the Gordons, on and in and upward, while the watching army gasped. None passed Mathias until he staggered and nearly fell, wounded in hand and foot.

Next came Major Forbes McBean's turn; he fell, seriously wounded in four places, cheering on his men, and shouting "Charge home, Gordons!" as he lay.

Gallant young Lieutenant Lamont, a youth in his early twenties, threw up his hands and fell face downward, shot through the heart; and twenty of the rank and file lay dead around him.



MATHIAS was still leading. For a moment he stood alone, not halfway up the pass; and a groan burst out from the watching generals and their staffs. Would the charge fail? Piper Findlater could not have heard the question, but he answered it. He sprang from the ranks

straight upward, straight into the hail of lead, leaping from rock to rock!

The Afridis concentrated their fire on him; ten volleys were loosed at him; the air above was thick with smoke, and the air around him shrieked with flying bullets, but on went Findlater—on, and upward. Halfway up the steep incline he leaped on to a narrow ledge and stood there in full view of the Gordons and the enemy and the watching army.

Then the mouthpiece of his pipe went to his lips, the bag expanded to the full, and again, over the noise of volleys and the din of the Afridi war-cry, rose the swaggering, mocking music of the "Cock o' the North!"

Then the Gordons went stark, staring, raving, fighting mad. Once more Colonel Mathias called on them, wounded though he was.

"Forward, Gordon Highlanders!" he shouted, and a sob went up from the very bowels of them as they charged up the hill behind him.

Even the tribesmen paused in wonder for a moment, and the Gordons' yell as they struggled upward behind their Colonel was like the hunting-snarl of a wolf-pack that has found.

The Afridis poured in volley after volley and swept the pathway with their concentrated fire. But nothing mattered now. If one Gordon lived, he would reach the summit. The whole length of the ascent men writhed and twisted in the agony of death; and as man after man fell face downward and bit the dust another sprang into his place—eyes upward, lips parted—reckless of pain and death and everything except the honor of the regiment!

The Afridis had been tuned up by their Mullahs. They had washed themselves and clothed themselves in white; they had prayed, bending toward Mecca, and had sworn to die there on the hilltop. But the Gordons' charge unnerved them for all their fanaticism.

Down went Piper Findlater, shot through both ankles, but the tune went on. He propped himself against a rock and skirled his martial music till the Gordons reached him and passed him and swept on to the summit and the leading files of them had buried their bayonets to the foresight in the hill's defenders.

Then he fell forward and fainted from the pain, and as he fell, as though in direct answer to a brave man's effort, the Afridis broke and ran, and the Gordons lay down on the hilltop and volleyed at them. Once more the old-time Ninety-second had achieved the quite impossible, and for at least the hundredth time in history had snatched a victory out of the very jaws of hell!



LEANING on his sword on the hilltop, bleeding and panting, stood Colonel Mathias, beside him was Ccolor-sergeant Mackie.

"Stiff climb, eh, Mackie?" said Mathias. "Not quite so young as I was!"

"Never you mind, sir!" answered Ccolor-sergeant Mackie, giving him a slap on the back which almost knocked all the remaining wind out of him; "ye're gaun verra strong for an auld man!"

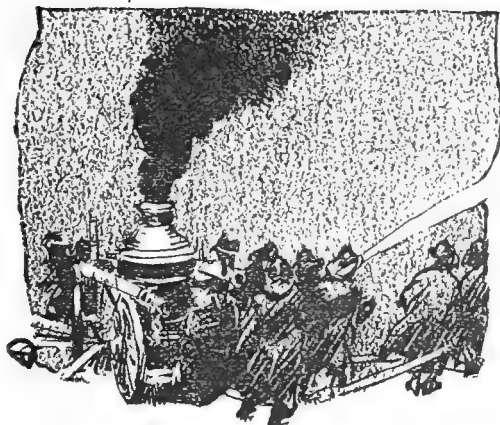
Mathias laughed, as he had a right to do. It is in the hour of battle, and above all in the reaction the moment after battle, that men's emotions are at their highest pitch and the truth comes out. By that one familiar blow between the shoulder-blades the color-sergeant let him know that he and the regiment loved him! His life's work was accomplished, and he had not worked in vain. It is not in the least easy to make a regiment love you!

The pipes wailed again when the moon arose; but this time it was "Lochaber No More." They were burying the Gordon dead in the sort of grave a soldier prays for—a trench cut by his comrades in the enemy's country. They laid them side by side, and fired the parting volleys over them, while an army that had seen them dare and do and die stood by with arms reversed and honored them; and the pipes they loved wailed their funeral march.

That was not quite five years ago. Up in Afridistan to-day the mothers quiet their children and frighten them to sleep by telling them the story of how the Gordons took Dargai—of how they wrested it from one thousand picked Afridi fighting-men; and, for fear the Gordons will once again come charging up the pass, the kids behave. One thousand years from now the thing will be a legend; the Gordons will be djinns or goblins in the story, and no one will believe it—except the children.

Flipflaps and Politics

by
CARL M. Chapin



ALDERMAN OWEN RORTY wormed himself deeper into the green-plush elegance of his imitation mahogany armchair and shifted his feet on the gilded radiator.

"All the same," he said aggressively, "I don't see how turnin' double flipflaps in the air 's goin' to help a man squirt water on a fire. Huh? Have another seegar."

The Fire Commissioner of Warmouth waved aside the proffered perfectos, though he had approved their worth. For his heart was sad. As civilian head of the Department in a far larger city, the Commissioner had long looked with the approving eye of an enthusiast—and a bit enviously—at the little Westerburg Department with its even hundred of upstanding men and its eighteen pieces of apparatus, perfectly appointed, speckless and resplendent, yet ever assertively businesslike. It was three years and more, now, since he had seen it, and the changes those years had wrought were searing his soul.

Alderman Rorty, as chairman of the Westerburg Fire Board, had been doing the honors of the Department and now, in the blatant prosperity of his own apartments, over his own good beer and Havanas, he was striving to make clear the reasons for those changes which he was uncomfortably conscious had not impressed his distinguished visitor very favorably.

"This circus stuff is all right, Commissioner," he went on, "*in* a circus. But what's it got to do with puttin' out fires? Huh? Y' see, the whole thing's like this: Here's this fellah Stafford comes up here from N' York—he'd been a fireman down there—an' he goes into the Department. That's fifteen years ago, maybe. An' he works up to Captain, on his merits, mind you; I give him credit for bein' a good fireman. An' then, when we're huntin' for a Chief, he looks pretty good to me an' I goes to N' York an' looks up his record, see? I goes to the men on the inside an' I finds he's in right, y' understand. An' I comes home an' makes him Chief.

"Well, you'd think, from what I heard about him in N' York, he'd know the game, wouldn't you? But maybe, bein' young, his head's swelled a little bit. Right off the bat he wants to be the whole show. Says they ain't goin' to be any politics in this Department as long as he's runnin' it. And you can't make him believe he ain't goin' to run it. He's goin' to be the great big capital IT from the first ding-a-ling.

"Now, Commissioner, you're a practical man. You've been in this game and you know just about how far you can get without politics—just about as far as the dumpheap, the next November! You got to stick to your friends, ain't you? The boys ain't electin' you to have you feedin' jobs

to the people that voted against you. When a party wins, the jobs belong to them, don't they? Well, you couldn't make Stafford see it. He wanted us to let him take these boys out an' break their necks with his circus business before we appointed 'em. And when we wouldn't let him do it he got sore.

"We'd built this drill tower for him—five stories high—before we got wise to his game. And when we wouldn't let him massacre the boys before they got into the Department, he took to doin' it after they was in. Every day he'd have a bunch of 'em over performin' on that tower, climbin' around on them scalin'-ladder things—you know 'em, flimsy things I wouldn't send a monkey up on—an' makin' 'em slide down ropes an' jump into nets an' a lot of more—foolishness. Now what's that got to do with squirtin' water on a fire? Huh? We ain't payin' those boys to risk their lives like that—they got to take chances enough when they's a real fire.

"An' when he didn't have 'em over on the tower he'd get that areeal truck out and keep 'em slavin' on that, histin' and lowerin' and runnin' up an' down and luggin' hose on to roofs till their backs was broke. An' between times he wouldn't let 'em do nothin' but wash wagons and scrub floors and shine brass and wash windows. They didn't hardly have time to eat their meals. An' he wouldn't let 'em sit out in front of the engine-house in Summer nor slip round the corner to talk to a girl a minute, nor nothin'.

"They got to shine their shoes every fifteen minutes and wear their caps just straight and keep their pants creased and their coats buttoned up with the thermometer a hundred in the shade. An' he wouldn't even let 'em smoke on the street. Now what in —'s that got to do with puttin' out fires?

 "HE WAS a wise one, all right. He couldn't fire 'em without us tryin' 'em on charges, but if they didn't perform to suit him he chucked 'em out in the woods an' left 'em there till they quit. An' one boy after another'd come to me an' say,

"This is a — of a deal we're gettin', Owen."

"What's the matter?" I'd say.

"Well," he says, 'I'm gettin' sick of

chinnin' myself a million times before breakfast an' throwing flipflaps over the City Hall and scrubbin' my fingers off, an' now the big stiff's put me out on the chemical in the Swamps an', honest to God, Owen, I ain't seen a soul in a month but two square-heads, truck farmin'. An' I'm goin' t' quit!"

"They was comin' to me about once a week like that, and pretty soon they was all quittin' an' nobody after the jobs. I had to go round the ward on my knees beggin' for boys to take the jobs, an' even so I couldn't get 'em. An' it was the same with the rest of the Board. An' all the time Stafford laughin' on the quiet and puttin' his own men on. He didn't care what they were, so long as they performed to suit him. He had Republicans and Socialists and Prohibitionists and everything else on that Department. He had one fellah for two months hadn't ever been naturalized.

"Well, I seen which way the wind was blowin', but I didn't tumble it was a tornado till Pat Foley came within eight votes of puttin' me down an' out at the primaries. An' then I got busy, an' the rest of the Board got busy, an' we put the kibosh on Mr. Stafford. We padlocked that drill tower an' we chained up the scalin'-ladders an' give him the tip to stop wearing the joints off that areeal truck. An' we worked over his rules so the Department wouldn't look quite so much like the penitentiary to the boys. Gave him to understand he was gettin' paid for puttin' out fires an' we wouldn't make him work overtime on our jobs.

"We couldn't fire him—that's the — of this life tenure business; the man what's got a life job's never grateful to the people appoints him. Stafford's all right, at that. He's a good fellow an' a good fireman an' we'd been glad to have him stay if he'd listen to reason. But he wouldn't; an' he quit; an' we let him go. Now we got a Chief, Jack Clancy, ain't so showy maybe as Stafford, but he puts the fires out an' don't keep the boys rubbed the wrong way all the time. An' most of Stafford's acrobats is gone now and we got the jobs back where they belong. We ain't so shiny, maybe, but we ain't burned up, yet."

"I notice your fire loss is getting a little heavier," suggested the Commissioner mildly.

"Well, maybe it is. But you see we had

three or four pretty big fires last few years, and they piled it up on us. But what's the good of them scalin'-ladder things, Commissioner? We never had any use for 'em."

"We always keep our men drilled up on them," the Commissioner answered. "You never know when you may need them."

"Sure," the Alderman chuckled. "An' you never know when you may need a aree-oplane, but you ain't carryin' one around in your vest pocket, just on the chanct—no offense to you, Commissioner," he added quickly.

"Now look here, we're as high up now as any place in the city—five stories, here, an' we've got that areeal ladder'll reach six easy, maybe seven. What's the use of makin' them boys take chances on them scalin'-ladders every day when all we got to do is shoot that areeal ladder up an' let 'em walk down it? We're carryin' them scalin'-ladders around on the wagons for looks an' to have 'em handy if we ever do need 'em. But we ain't never had to save a life since the city started; why, we ain't even had to use the areeal in five or six years; ain't had it up at all since we pried Stafford loose from it."

"How do you know you could hoist it in an emergency, then?" the Commissioner asked.

"Hoist it!" laughed the Alderman. "All you got to do is turn them cranks, ain't it? Those boys ain't fools, Commissioner."

"Well," said the Commissioner, "I hope you'll never have to use it. It's bad business under the best conditions, this life-saving. Just about time to catch my train."

The Alderman pressed another "seegar" upon him and saw him comfortably smoking it in a corner of his cab. Then he ascended again to the green-plush chair and the gilded radiator. He mused drowsily over the things of which he had been talking; reverted to the hard beginnings of his life, before "Politics" had opened the gateway to pleasure and prosperity; and to the wife whose brave spirit had steadied his footsteps over the rough pathway and who had gone, he firmly believed, to a better life—and, thinking of her, he fell asleep.

II



IT MAY be that Alderman Rorty dreamed of a monster which sat upon his chest and choked away his

breath with fiery talons. Physical sensation frequently finds such reflection in the subconsciousness of dreams. At any rate he emerged slowly from the torpor of sleep into a torpor that was even more potent.

He was choking; striving to breathe an element that was thick and suffocating as unimaginable dust yet thin and cutting to his throat as the edge of a keen knife. His eyes, when he opened them, were shot through with pains that rendered them sightless. He was striving to keep alive in an atmosphere where no creature with lungs attuned to the air of heaven can hope to live—for long. His room was full of the yellow smoke that comes from the burning of that rich, resinous pine with which the callous cupidity of the speculative builder delights to cram the ornate shell of his modern apartment house.

The Alderman dragged himself from his chair and lurched out blindly in an instinctive effort to reach the door—that most obvious exit which is, under such conditions, so often the least promising. He was holding his breath with the agony of a swimmer who has dived too deep. His whirling head had lost all sense of direction and of equilibrium, but somehow he reached the wall and pawed madly along it until his hands encountered the door. He opened this and his head was smothered in a wave of smoke so thick that he could feel its oily softness against his face; so hot it seared his skin.

The harsh crackle of flames, together with the sting of the heat, gave him the impression that he had opened the door of a living furnace. He slammed the door to and threw his body against it.

Owen Rorty was no coward. He came of a race whose manifestations of physical cowardness are noteworthy chiefly for their rarity. And he had been trained in a school from which few cowards emerge alive. But there is something in the trapping smoke of fire that grips the very heart of man, smothering courage and intelligence alike. A hair's-breadth difference of temperament would have dropped Owen Rorty in his tracks, there against the door. Firemen on their ghastly mission find many so, with other infinitely better chances of life close at hand.

But the Rorty type seldom says die while it can draw breath, even though that breath be nine parts smoke. The Alderman sank to his knees, still with his eyes tight closed,

and crept blindly out into the room. The familiar furniture guided him with many a friendly bump until his head struck the gilded radiator. In a moment more he was hanging across the window-ledge, drawing the air into his lungs with sobs of gratitude.

When his eyes had cleared a little he tried to pierce the smoke below. It was wafting from every window of the great, bare wall and boiling about him in clouds that, but for the contrast to the atmosphere he had just escaped, would have stifled him. He could see the hurrying figures; could hear their frightened, senseless shouting. But where were the firemen? Why did not one of those fools cease his useless running about and ring the alarm? What had they been doing through all those long hours?

He tried to call, but the cords of his throat refused to act. He raged inwardly with the fury of a man betrayed and deserted. Then a cry arose from the street with a new tone that pierced through the jumble of his senses. Above the confused murmur of tongues he heard, faintly but with heavenly distinctness, the mellow ding-dong of an apparatus bell and the swift, sharp clackety-clack of steel-shod hoofs on the asphalt. No one who has ever waited through those long minutes, amid the unearthly silence that seems to shroud a burning building sometimes, will ever forget that sound.

A sense of relief that was almost physical surged over the Alderman. He leaned farther out to catch the flashing gleams that came to him brokenly through the smoke rifts. How slowly they crawled! And when at length they drew up at the curb, almost below him, his heart shriveled again. Only a chemical engine!

But still, they were firemen. No longer the "boys" who had come to him, one after another, seeking the reward of services rendered; no longer the sons of his old neighbors, who had grown up under his eye over there in the old Hill ward; no longer flesh and blood like his helpless self, but firemen—those workers of miracles whose omnipotence we regard so little until we hang there in the strangling smoke, awaiting a manifestation of it. Owen Rorty looked down upon the three black helmets, upon the brass tanks that still retained a vestige of their pristine glitter, upon the slender scaling-ladder above the tanks—and felt that he was saved. He felt that they could not fail.



THE smoke from the airless interior, pouring out beside him, was strangling him. He realized that, if he was to cling to consciousness until they came to get him, he must somehow cut off that killing current. Outside, the smoke, if not perceptibly thinner, was to some degree impregnated with air. He dragged his body over the radiator and hoisted himself dizzily to his feet on the broad ledge outside. Then he carefully pulled the window down behind him. The relief was instantaneous. He pressed his back against the glass, very giddy from the smoke and from the glimpses of distance below that came to him through the rifts. He was aware that a new cry was rising to him from the growing crowd.

"Don't jump! Don't jump!"

It irritated the Alderman, as useless warnings always do irritate. Did he, Owen Rorty, chairman of the Fire Board, need such advice from them? Didn't he know that the firemen, his firemen, were there, ready to save him? Did the fools think that he was some crazy woman? He swung his arm with a gesture of exasperation. The crowd accepted it as a sign of appreciation and reassurance—and breathed again.

But the cry had served to attract the attention of the chemical crew. They were madly seeking a target for their pitiful little stream when they heard the shout. They dropped the line and ran back to the street, craning their necks.

"God! Tim," the lieutenant cried, "there's some one up there!"

The smoke opened for an instant and they saw the Alderman clearly, as he stood upon the ledge, looking down at the crowd.

"My God," the hoseman stuttered, "it's Owen Rorty, an' he's goin' t' jump. Don't jump! F'r God's sake, don't jump!"

The men stared into each other's blanched faces. Their limbs were palsied, not by fear, but by the same helpless horror that possessed all about them. Only their uniforms differentiated them from any others of the men who stood there with trembling knees and choking throats.

"Ladders! Ladders!"

It was the crowd, howling at them accusingly.

"Where in ——'s the truck? Why don't she come?" the lieutenant complained.

The crowd was surging about them, cursing, imploring, advising. The lieutenant

ant looked desperately around, but there was no sign of the truck—only an engine company which had stopped, midway in its task of stretching in, to join the bellowing throng.

"God, Tim, we gotta do somethin'! Get that scalin'-ladder!"

The lieutenant's voice was the voice of a man who says "forward" to a forlorn hope. They clambered up on the chemical engine and fumbled nervously at the simple buckles that held the ladder in place. Another engine rolled in and its crew jostled a way through the crowd, pouring out nervous, futile questions and suggestions. Clancy, the Chief, lunged up to the group, but he had nothing to offer save a medley of oaths and feverish commands to hurry.

The minutes were flying with deadly swiftness—though not so swiftly as they seemed to fly. At last the buckles yielded, the ladder was lifted down and the lieutenant stood alone with it upon the sidewalk, face to face with the terror of his responsibility. At that instant he would joyfully have changed places with Owen Rorty, poised on the very edge of his window-ledge up there, his arms outstretched in the attitude of leaping.

"Don't jump! Don't jump! Don-n-n't!"

Very flat and commonplace those words look in the cold type that can convey no realization of the utter horror that sends them forth to a helpless fellow being, tortured to extremity. The figure on the window-ledge hung balanced an instant, then sank back with a gesture of resignation. And just then the three big grays of the truck team thrust their noses around the corner. A weak shout went up as the big truck ranged up to the curb with her crew already jumping to the cranks.

Nervous hands made bungling work of it, but at last the cranks were adjusted to the pinions, and on either side of the truck men strained against them. The men of the engine companies, mad with the desire to help, pressed their comrades of the truck, their own allotted tasks forgotten. For they lacked utterly the coördination of discipline which would have sent them where they could have helped most, regardless of the crises elsewhere.

And so they crowded about, brave, eager, but utterly helpless, hampering their own best efforts and those of their comrades. And the Chief, who should have directed

all, toiled at a crank like a common private. And the minutes raced away while the man above, choking, fainting, gritted his teeth against the tearing temptation to end his agony.

The tip of the big ladder lifted from its bed, swayed from side to side, lifted again, and swung free. Inch by inch it crept upward to the screeching of its rusted bearings and the deep panting of the men. One foot, two it rose, and stuck! The men at the cranks strained afresh, their faces purple. The engine crews leaped upon the truck and put their shoulders beneath the shuddering ladder, straining, too, until the veins stood out on their foreheads. But the ladder refused to budge.

"Lower away!" cried Clancy, his voice breaking with nervousness.

The men eased up on the cranks and the big stick slumped back into its bed, hurling the volunteers in all directions.

"Hoist away! All together, now—Ha-ard!"

Again the cranks groaned and again the ladder rose—three feet this time before it stuck. Once more it dropped back, and above the babel of oaths and suggestions that arose from the group of firemen came again that wail from the crowd.

Utterly desperate now, Rorty was crouched upon the ledge's rim, squatting upon his heels, his arms drawn up ready for the leap. So far did his body incline over the street that it seemed impossible he could ever recover himself. This time he resisted longer the frenzied pleading from the street. Thrice, as a rift stood open in the smoke, they saw him sway forward and every heart felt that the time had come. But either he lost his courage, or he found it, for he leaned back once more and put his hands across his face.

The laddermen still struggled in vain with their cranks, but the chemical lieutenant had swung himself up astride the first floor window-sill and was cautiously inching the scaling ladder up the wall above his head. It swayed back and forth in a wide arc, as though in derision of his pitiful efforts to control it.

It reached the window above and slipped lightly across the heavy glass. The lieutenant struggled in vain to balance it for a shattering blow. His best efforts were mere taps upon the resisting plate. He swung the top of the ladder out, away from the

window, in a desperate effort, and the unwieldy thing, overbalancing itself, tumbled to the street, dragging him after it.

 AND now the crowd was silent as death itself. Many bowed their heads or turned away. The firemen, looking up, jumped aside as one man and left the sidewalk clear. Rorty stood upright this time, his arms bent, his elbows pressed to his sides, his fists clenched. His knees bent a trifle, the jumper's crouch, and just then a voice from the depth of the crowd cut across the stillness. It was not a shout; just loud enough to carry the distance; clear, measured, conversational,

"Don't jump, Owen; I'll get you!"

Rorty hesitated, but he did not seem to understand. Again his body trembled as it stiffened for the leap.

"Don't you jump, — — — you!"

This time the voice was threatening. It roused Rorty, reassured him; and he sank back against the window as the wiry form of Stafford elbowed its way free of the crowd. There was no sign of haste as he threw his coat on the truck and stooped to pick up the broad canvas life-belt which the ignorance of the lieutenant had discarded upon the sidewalk. As he buckled it on with steady fingers he said to the gaping firemen,

"Get your lines in there and hit that fire. What in — — — you hanging round here for? Get those boys to work, Jack!" he added to the nerveless Chief.

"Spread your life-net, quick! Chuck me a line!"

His orders came sharp, swift, level, with no trace of excitement or haste. But before a man could move to obey them he had fastened his belt, stuck a spanner in the waistband of his trousers and drenched his handkerchief at the sill-cock in the foundation wall. With the dripping cloth clenched in his teeth and a life-line across his shoulder he swung himself astride the window-sill from which the lieutenant had fallen.

There was no wavering of the ladder now. Straight and swift it glided up the wall, swung steadily out, turned and crashed through the glass. Before the crowd could catch its breath Stafford was facing the belching window, the great hook of his life-

belt snapped to the ladder's neck, while he beat in the glass with his spanner to make a resting-place for his leg. In another instant he was astride the sill and the docile ladder was climbing the wall above him. Again the crash of the jagged hook through the glass—and he was one story nearer the fainting man.

He reached Rorty just in time to catch his collapsing form and drag it through the window he had beaten in. It was the work of a second to knot the line beneath his arms, and before the crowd could catch its breath it saw the Alderman lying on the grass of a neighboring lawn with the doctors working over him. It saw Stafford release the dangling rope, which came coiling down like a diving snake.

It watched him descend to earth, swiftly but easily, by the path he had climbed. And then men looked at one another, feeling very tired and unsteady, and just a bit foolish in the grip of reaction. Stafford removed the handkerchief from his mouth and spat dryly.

He restored the scaling-ladder to its rack and took a long drink from the sill-cock. Then he surveyed the building and walked over to the Chief, still wandering dazedly about.

"Jack," he said humorously, "I don't want to be butting in here, but if I was you I'd pull a general. Seems to be something going on inside there."

They carried Owen Rorty into a house and the Fire Commissioner of Warmouth followed. He found the Alderman weak and shaky but otherwise not much the worse. Rorty looked at him in surprise as the Commissioner wrung his limp hand.

"Missed my train," he explained.

"How long was I up there?" Rorty whispered hoarsely.

"Fifteen minutes by the watch, after I got here."

"It was a year," said Rorty, solemnly. "And if it hadn't been for Bill Stafford——"

The Commissioner found temptation too strong.

"Rather a timely flipflap he threw there," he said slyly.

But the Alderman only shuddered and covered his face with his hands.

The Poker Players of Palinggu



E.A. Morphy

DESPITE the natural confidence inspired by the manner and appearance of Mr. Trench, and despite the unfailing bonhomie of Mr. Carrington, there could be no gainsaying the fact that their popularity was beginning to wane at the Court of the Sultan of Palinggu.

Doubtless each succeeding day saw them more exalted than did its predecessor in the favor of his Highness himself. Neither in the East nor the West, however, is it easy to win the love and esteem of a courtier by superseding him in the good graces of his ruler.

This circumstance had something to do with the decline in general popularity of the Sultan's alien guests; but there were other and perhaps more cogent causes.

His Highness, whose progressive spirit and broad-minded assimilation of European methods had ever been the delight of all official visitors to his island, took to the ennobling pastime of draw-poker (as expounded by Mr. Trench) as readily as a duck takes to water, and, under the able tutelage of Mr. Trench and Mr. Carrington, quickly acquired a startling and most

commendable proficiency in the alluring mysteries of the game.

With philanthropic magnanimity, Messrs. Trench and Carrington both resolutely refused really to play poker "for keeps" with the dusky potentate until they felt assured—as they modestly explained—that the expertness of their royal host was at least equal to their own. Vainly did his Highness expatiate upon his dangerous proficiency and the limitless resources of his treasury. His guests were adamant. Between themselves, they admitted, they always played for thousands, but with a new player, a ten-cent ante and a dollar limit was as high as they cared to soar.

His Highness chafed bitterly. But he was a ruler of great resourcefulness and remarkable determination of purpose, for a Malay. He made the Tunku Mentri, or Chief Adviser to the Throne, and also the Bendahara, or Prime Minister, watch him taking his lessons, so that they also might learn the true inwardness of the game. He pursued a similar course with the Temenggong, the Laksamana and the Shahbandar, because, as he explained to these high officials, respectively, it would be a source of

perpetual shame and sorrow to a State so enlightened as Palinggu if ever the news got abroad that its Chief Justice, Chief Admiral and Chief of Customs were all alike ignorant of the rudiments of such a useful science as draw-poker.

Having launched them fairly on their study, he made them practise it by playing with himself. In their case—all being equal as regarded experience—there could be no compunction on either side about playing the game properly and in the royal fashion, as it is played by the "Tuans" themselves. There was, therefore, no such thing as a limit of any kind. For only by playing thus, on the living bodies of his courtiers, so to speak, could his Highness hope to qualify for the enviable privilege of a real game with the Tuans, Trench and Carrington.



NOW, it is not etiquette in Palinggu, or elsewhere in the Orient, for a Palace or State official to defeat his royal lord and master in any contest of strength or skill. In these circumstances, the Sultan's path to proficiency in draw-poker was one long wave of triumph and gladness.

But it was hard upon the private fortunes of the Chief Adviser, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, and the High Admiral, not to mention the Chief of Customs. This was especially so as the proficiency of the Sultan increased with his extended experience, and his naturally great pluck and self-reliance increased with his matured proficiency. Commensurately with the strengthening of his self-confidence, his Highness multiplied the magnitude of his bets, and every member of his Cabinet saw beggary staring him in the face.

At this juncture, and by subtle ways in which the polite nobles of Malaya are especially skilled, Messrs. Trench and Carrington were allowed to feel that their popularity was distinctly waning.

It was after the receipt of a delicate hint to the effect that it might be wise for them to abstain from eating any sweetmeats or curries that were the gift of the learned Temenggong, that the Americans awoke to a realization of the fact that poker in Palinggu was a Frankenstein of dreadful potentialities. They did not state the case to themselves in that precise way, but it was what they meant.

"In the circumstance, Bill," said Mr. Car-

ington, "I think you ought to take the bull by the horns and let his joblots, the Lord Chief Justice, have a whack at the pot. Otherwise there won't be no pot as far as you and me is concerned—only glowing obituary notices on two gifted Yankee millionaire capitalists that nobody back New York or San Francisco way will ever take to be you and me."

"Guess that's a good egg, Aleck," agreed Mr. Trench. "It's up to me to tackle some of [the lobsters to-night and put 'em wise to it that I'm going to get some of their own back for them out of their enlightened ruler."

"Tell the old Bendahara that he'll come in for a peep at the rake-off, too," advised Carrington. "It will probably be up to him, as Prime Minister, to dig up the spondulicks, and he'll be likely to do it quicker if he has hopes of touching a bit of the pot."

"Sure!" said Mr. Trench.



IT WOULD be tedious to recapitulate the details of that famous night's play in Palinggu. Prior to the introduction of poker, the card-players of Palinggu confined their energies to *Dawn-tiga lei*—a pestilentially slow proposition, in the course of which the Malay player, with that disregard of time-values which is the essence of Oriental life, prolongs his excitement by examining his cards half a pip at a time, so that it takes him five or ten minutes to learn the face value of the three cards which constitutes his own hand. This habit of procrastination is not suited to the exigencies of draw-poker. But, as it was ineradicable from the heart of the Sultan, the two Americans had to put up with it as best they could.

What their game lacked in speed, however, was compensated for in the size of the stakes; and the great nobles of Palinggu who were privileged to witness that unique and wonderful contest between their Sultan and the Tuans from the Farthest West, felt their livers shriveling under their jackets as they saw the fortunes that changed hands at every turn of the play.

Suffice it to say that when the dawn came and Mr. Carrington, who had been nodding at intervals, apparently dropped off fast asleep in the middle of a hand, he was the winner of over ninety thousand in Palinggu currency. Mr. Trench had lost some fifteen

thousand. The firm was a round seventy-five thousand to the good, and the Sultan was looking uneasy.

"I'm afraid, your Highness," said Mr. Trench, "that my friend is not strong enough. He has been down with fever for a spell, and this is the first time he has sat up after midnight for nearly a year. We must put him to bed and let him see a doctor during the day."

The Private Adviser—pallid with anxiety at the disregard his ruler had evinced toward the winks and nudges with which he had endeavored to persuade him to milder play—heartily concurred with the views of Mr. Trench. The Prime Minister and the Chief Justice also supported them.

Mr. Trench delicately suggested that one of the nobles should help him escort Mr. Carrington to his apartments, and then assist him in carrying back to his Highness the few thousand *ringgits* he had lost over the game. Such little matters, as his Highness knew very well, were always settled "on the nail."

The Sultan wilted with visible apprehension, and glanced significantly at the Bendahara. The Bendahara returned a quick glance of comprehension, and tactfully placed himself beside Mr. Trench.

"The Tuans will understand," said he, "that his Highness can not approach his Treasury for the moment, because his officials who carry the keys are asleep. By noon, however, the amount of Tuan Carrington's winnings will be brought to your bungalow under my own escort. It will then be ample time for Tuan Trench to hand over the sum that he has lost to his Highness."

"Right, oh! Bendy, my boy," graciously acquiesced Mr. Trench; "I'm sure I'm awfully obliged to his Highness for his courtesy in the circumstances. Honestly, I feel a bit too tired to enjoy the prospect of counting out fifteen thousand cartwheels before turning in for a trifle of sleep."

Thus, with repeated assurances of the highest esteem and most distinguished consideration on all sides, the company separated for the night, and the dazed and drowsy apostle of the rubber industry of the future was escorted to his bungalow and couch.

"By noon, old man," Mr. Trench admonished his partner, before he got under his own mosquito-curtains, "by noon, you'll

be bad with fever, but just strong enough to sit up and sign a receipt for the ooftish. By night you'll get worse. To-morrow I'll be tearing my hair in sorrow and apprehension; and next day we'll take you down country to hospital. Later on—that is to say, by and by, or hereafter—we'll come back and turn these virgin everglades into smiling groves of india-rubber trees with pneumatic tires blossoming on all their blinking branches!"

"And the golf balls will be dangling down, seven or nine of 'em in each pod!" added Mr. Carrington. "It's wonderful what this climate will do if you only cultivate your potatoes according to Hoyle, and plant seeds of the best quality."

"Plant suckers, you mean," corrected Mr. Trench.

Then the two gentlemen went to sleep.

II



SOME time about an hour past midday Mr. Trench, in response to the urgent representations of his servant, hurried out to the veranda to greet the Tuan Rajah Bendahara.

"Great suffering Moses!" gasped Mr. Trench as he shook the distinguished visitor by the hand, "Great suffering Moses! Who has taken this private veranda for a crockery shop?"

"Say boy!" he continued, turning to the servant, "kick them blinking pots to paradise, and tell the blanked pedler that put 'em there that I'll kick him after them, and into them, if he don't shift the leavings blanked quick!"

The Chinaman wavered.

"Quick, you blighter!" shouted Mr. Trench. "Clear 'em out and place a chair for the Rajah Bendahara!"

For one instant longer the servant paused, and gazed piteously at the Prime Minister. That distinguished noble only gazed back, dumfounded, and his jaw fell.

Mr. Trench stepped forward swiftly. He was white with anger at the seeming affront to his guest. In a second he had seized the nearest and largest of the countless litter of earthenware jars which crowded the floor of the veranda, and hurtled it crashing into a thousand pieces on the hard earth of the driveway.

"Tuan! Tuan!" cried Chinaman and Malay, while from a motley throng of na-

tives in the compound beneath the veranda railing rose an amazed murmur and whisperings that the Tuan was mad.

As Trench grasped at the next of the offending jars the Bendahara literally flung himself upon him.

"Spare the *nagas*, Tuan!" he besought the irate American, "they are treasures which there can be no replacing! Three thousand dollars of the Sultan's money which were intended for the payment of Tuan Carrington are represented in the fragments of the jar which you have just destroyed. These that are left on your veranda represent another fifty thousand!"

With a comprehensive gesture of hand and arm the Prime Minister embraced the immense collection of obviously second-hand pottery that literally left nothing but standing-room in the immediate vicinity of the doorway.

"They are *nagas*, Tuan!" explained the Bendahara in reply to Trench's expression of amazed inquiry. "They are *nagas* of the best—jars of inconceivable antiquity—such as are used by our people for the payment of their taxes and all obligations in excess of two hundred dollars. Assuredly the Tuans did not imagine that in the whole of Palinggu they would find a sum of seventy thousand in real dollars!"

Trench felt his heart sinking down into his boots, but he kept the stiff upper lip that was part of his stock in trade.

"I apologize, my dear sir!" he exclaimed, "I apologize most humbly. Honest to goodness, though, I never guessed that the crockery was cash, and I'm awfully sorry about melting up that three thousand in the potsherds there. Count it as four thousand paid. Friends should not fall out about a paltry trifle like that!"

The Bendahara bowed gravely.

"I have other matters to mention," he proceeded. "Unhappily there were not enough *nagas* in the Treasury to pay Tuan Carrington in full—'on the nail,' as the Tuan puts it. But his Highness has done the best he can. He knows from his Excellency the Resident General that the Tuans want concessions of land for their rubber plantations. It is difficult for his Highness to value lands after the fashion of the Tuans, and he knows not what thirty thousand dollars' worth of land would measure.

"There is a tract, however, for which an accursed Jew has dared to proffer his High-

ness no less than a lakh of dollars. He is an Armenian, Nathan by name, and a money lender belike, such as stinks in the nostrils of Allah. If the land be worth one hundred thousand dollars to the usurer, it will be worth thirty thousand to the Tuans. But the Tuans will use the land well and cultivate it so as to bring wealth to the country of Palinggu. Therefore the Tuans will have the proper deeds of transfer and possession, as well as the right to work it and export its products—its fruits or its minerals—for ten years free of all imposts and taxes. Thus, though his Highness be short alike of *nagas* and silver *ringgits*, will he settle with the Tuans 'on the nail,' and fulfil the laws of poker as they be writ."

"Bully for you, Bendy!" said Mr. Trench, as the Minister brought his courtly oration to a close, "and bully for his Highness, too. But I'm sorry to tell you that Mr. Carrington is laid up with fever pretty bad, and I'll have to attend to the details for him. Does your Ex mind stepping inside for a moment or two, so that we can talk a bit of biz without spreading it over this particular side of Asia?"

Mr. Trench winked intelligently as he spoke, an operation which the Bendahara reciprocated with grave decorum but obvious difficulty.



THE heart-to-heart talk that ensued lasted the better part of an hour. In the course of that conversation the Bendahara explained that he had never seen ten thousand dollars in cash, and that he would sooner have the gracious token of esteem which he had been promised by Mr. Trench in cash or in *nagas* than in land. There was land all about the place. He did not want any. *Nagas*, on the other hand, were rare. Those particular *nagas* that were now delivered on account of the Sultan's poker debts were really worth more than the stated fifty thousand, but the Sultan had considered it better to pay the Tuans full measure and flowing over, because of the difficulties that he felt they might experience in the handling and transfer of such fragile currency.

To bear out this assertion, the Bendahara sent a messenger to his own house for a book that had been written by a Tuan of high rank, and printed in English many years before, wherein was set forth the real

nature and value of these *nagas*; and from that book Trench learned there and then that what the Bendahara stated concerning the jars was true. It ran as follows:

Amongst them are found jars held by them in high veneration, the manufacturers of which are forgotten; the smaller ones are common. They are called Nagas, from the Naga, a dragon, which is rudely traced upon them. They are glazed on the outside, and the current value of them is forty dollars; but those found amongst the Kadyans and other tribes of the North are valued so highly as to be altogether beyond the means of ordinary persons, and are the property of the Malayan Rajahs. . . . They (the larger jars) have small handles round them, called ears by the natives: their value is about two thousand dollars. In the houses of their owners, to whom they are a source of great profit, they are kept with pious care, being covered with beautiful cloths. Water is kept in them which is sold to the tribe, and valued on account of the virtues which it is supposed to possess and which it derives from the jar which has contained it.

That fact, however, did not remove the objections which could be raised against antique crockery as a substitute for metallic or paper currency when considered from the professional point of view of a poker-expert errant like himself or Mr. Carrington. Intuitive delicacy of sentiment prevented his putting the matter in this light before the Bendahara, so he took another course that he felt would appeal more effectively to the heart of the normal Malay, who invariably takes to avarice as his special virtue when he passes middle age.

"It's a matter I couldn't well lay before his Highness," explained Mr. Trench, "but a statesman like yourself will twig where the shoe pinches in half a jiffy. In the States, we've got an import duty of 60 per cent. on manufactured crockery of every kind. Then we've got another duty of some 30 per cent. on antiquities and works of art. Freight and insurance on fancy jars of the *naga* class would run me in for another 25 or 30 per cent. So, if I was to start out and take 'em to Mr. Carrington's home in California, I'd be some sixty thousand dollars out of pocket before I could begin to cash in what was left out of the fifty thousand worth of jars; and then the bankers would want their little whack on the exchange. So it would really be worse than handing papier-maché doughnuts to poor Aleck's orphans if he was to die and I was to tote home the *nagas* for him."

The Bendahara raised his hands in distressed sympathy, then hastened to reassure Mr. Trench.

"Praise be to Allah, Tuan!" he piously explained, "Providence hath its uses for all things! There are still a few Jews in the country of Palinggu; and though we take from them all we can, as is proper with such verminous usurers, they have still got money and treasure that we can in no manner lay our hands upon. One such would be glad to give a bond for dollars against all the *nagas* the Tuans may care to exchange.

"The bond would be paid in full by some banker beyond our pale—an accomplice from whom we poor powerless administrators here can secure none of the usurers' ill-gotten plunder. To such a man I can readily commend you. In fact, I can summon one here; and if he does not at once offer a fair and honorable rate upon the Sultan's *nagas*, the Tuans will themselves look on and see his heart expanding with charity while we drive toothpicks in between his nails and his fingers!"



UNDER these encouraging auspices Mr. Allagappa Pillay was presently inducted to the bungalow, where, under the watchful eye of the Bendahara, he was asked to give a note for cash against the collection of jars that littered the veranda.

"How much, thou heathen?" demanded the Bendahara.

The despairing one detected a gleam of sympathy in Trench's eye, and turned to him for mercy.

"How much did the Tuan require?" he begged.

"His Highness has handed them over for an obligation of fifty thousand dollars," said Trench.

The pallor vanished from the face of the lender and was supplanted by an aureole of joy.

"I can give the Tuan five thousand more," said he; "those are *nagas* of the highest class."

The menacing scowl on the face of the Bendahara melted.

"I think I can leave you for a little while to arrange this matter," said he to the American.

"One moment, Bendy, old boy," interposed Mr. Trench as he drew the Prime Minister to one side and sank his voice to a whisper. "You're going to get a quarter of this lay-out as a token of my own and

Mr. Carrington's appreciation of all the kindnesses we have received from yourself and the Temenggong. Would you like it in jars or cash?"

A heavenly radiance illumined the leathern features of the Bendahara.

"Now that the Tuan speaks," said he, "I will tell him my heart's desire. I covet this *nagal*" He indicated one that seemed especially old and fragile. "For the rest, I might have use for the money. As I have explained to the Tuan, I have never yet seen in real *ringgits* such a sum as ten thousand dollars."

Mr. Trench had no difficulty. The man was of high intelligence on all points pertaining to money, and handed Mr. Trench two checks on the Chartered Bank for the full amount—one of thirteen thousand payable to the Bendahara, one of forty-two thousand payable to Mr. Carrington. At the moment of departure he glanced around him nervously, as though fearful that the walls might hear.

"It is said that his Highness has given to the Tuans the land that was sought by my friend Israel Nathan, the banker of Singapore," he whispered. "There may be more in it than mere room to plant rubber trees. I am a poor man, Tuan, but I have much faith in the wisdom of Israel Nathan. Perhaps the Tuans would like to sell a share in their venture?"

Mr. Trench's ambition was to get out of Palinggu, and Asia generally, as expeditiously as possible, and with all the money he could secure. He had as much use for the concession sought by Nathan, the Jew, as a hog has for a holiday; but the anxiety of the native set him a-thinking. To sell out to the man at once might precipitate inquiries. For, why should a millionaire who had gone burrowing into the heart of Malaya in quest of an especial spot for planting rubber or anything else immediately dispose of that spot the moment he had secured it?

On the other hand, Mr. Trench fully realized that he was skating on very thin ice. The world was frightfully small, and at any moment some all-too-solid specter might bob up out of the past and recognize in the pseudo-millionaire and his planter friend the two eminent professional gamblers of San Francisco. In such an event, he reckoned, the English authorities might turn rusty and despoil him of the emolu-

ments that had accrued from the introduction of draw-poker to the wilderness of Palinggu.

The dilemma was a serious one, but Mr. Trench was a swift thinker, and one of the rudimentary maxims of his calling was, "When in doubt, collar the cash."

Therefore, and so as not to betray himself prematurely, he looked at him sorrowfully and slowly and solemnly shook his head.

"I am afraid it would be impossible," said he; "I'm dead nuts on this rubber proposition, and it would not do for me to burst up our prospects and make the Sultan feel dissatisfied by fossicking about after anything else the very minute he had granted me the concessions."

"They say, Tuan," persisted the other, "that the Tuans have received the land and the concessions in payment of a debt of thirty thousand dollars. I will pay them thirty thousand for only a half share in it. I have great faith in the sagacity of my friend Israel Nathan, the Jew, and I would therefore be ready to buy the share though it begged me to gather together so much money."

Mr. Trench hummed and hawed; then he took the lender into his confidence: He did not wish a soul in Palinggu to suspect the truth, but his friend Mr. Carrington was grievously ill, and he feared he might not survive the voyage back to America. At any rate it was unlikely that he would be strong enough to return to the tropics for another year; and without Mr. Carrington, he, Mr. Trench, could do nothing with a planting proposition. Therefore there would be a delay of fifteen or eighteen months, for certain. He would hand over the entire concession for sixty thousand, money down, reserving for himself the right to repurchase the property after fifteen months at double that price, should his friend then be well enough to return to the country.

"I can see myself toddling back to Palinggu," reflected Mr. Trench to himself, "if ever I can scrape my way back to the little old United States with a hundred thousand of the best Palinggu spondulicks in my bank-account!"

Thus it came about that Mr. Trench disposed of the Palinggu Concessions to Mr. T. R. K. A. L. Allagappa Pillay for sixty thousand dollars.

III



TWO days later Mr. Carrington—a groaning and shivering, fever-stricken wreck—was tenderly carried on board a house-boat, so called, and taken down-river by Mr. Trench. The Sultan himself came to the water-side to bid farewell to his visitors, and to express the hope that the speedy recovery of Mr. Carrington would insure the quick return to Palinggu of the two Americans. The Bendahara and the Temenggong were equally polite and solicitous. Indeed everybody seemed to be sympathetic.

"It is an ill wind blows nobody good, your Highness," smiled Mr. Trench as he shook hands with the potentate for the last time, after having carefully arranged the suffering wreck of Mr. Carrington under the mosquito curtains. "While I'm waiting for my friend Aleck, here, to buck up and get out of hospital, I'll most likely accept the invitation I got to put up with the Resident General at Government House. In that event I think I can promise that I'll get his Ex. to push through that 'G. C. M. G.' for you by Christmas. There'll be a 'K. C. SI.' coming along, too, as soon as we get the rubber bearing. But I don't want to be shouting about that just yet. Good-by!"

Tears of gratitude glistened in the eyes of the dusky ruler as the sturdy boatmen pushed out from the bank and the thatched-roofed craft took its slow course down-river to the China Sea.

Thirty minutes later Mr. Carrington arose from his bed of sickness and tossed away the curtains.

"What I want now, Bill," said he, "is a good stiff drink and a good wet dash. If you'd kept on nursing me any longer, I'd have got real, O. K. and genuinely ill."

With such cheerful booty as a hundred thousand dollars to talk about, the three days of the journey down-river to the Kuala passed pleasantly enough. So also did the two days' voyage in the little steamer that took them from the Kuala to Singapore. At Singapore they drove to Raffles Hotel, where they bathed themselves and then sat down to a civilized breakfast such as they had not known for many days.

It was while they were crowning this repast with a delicious cold whisky-and-soda and a fragrant Havana cigar that the polite

and courteous manager brought in a card which he handed to Mr. Trench.

"If you will kindly bring the gentleman up to my room, Joe," said Mr. Trench, "we'll join him there in two minutes. Ask him what he'd like to drink."

As the genial Joe retired, Mr. Trench flicked the card across to his partner.

"I guess we didn't win out of Palinggu a single jiffy too soon, Aleck," said he, "This looks like as how our game is now all U. P. on this side of Asia."

Mr. Carrington scrutinized the card carefully. It was inscribed simply:

P. J. CASSIDY

INSPECTOR, K. DIVISION
SINGAPORE POLICE

"We've done nothing they can run us in for," quickly commented Mr. Carrington.

"Nope," agreed Mr. Trench dubiously, "but I don't think that Mr. Cassidy has been sent here merely to inquire after our health. Anyhow, we must go up and see him and take our little dose of medicine."

Mr. Cassidy was a pleasant and intuitively tactful Celt. He cheerfully accepted Mr. Trench's invitation to a whisky-and-soda, and laid down his khaki helmet carefully as he sat in the little reception-room that opened full to the veranda. Presently he got down to business.

"There's the German Mail do be leaving at four o'clock to-day," said he. "I suppose you'd be after thinking of leaving by it?"

"Why, certainly," said Mr. Trench, promptly, "of course we are."

Mr. Carrington said nothing.

"Well, that'll be all right," added the Inspector. "I don't suppose you'll mind going aboard a bit early—just for convenience like?"

"Not a bit," said Mr. Trench.

"Have you got your tickets yet?" inquired the officer. "If not, I can get 'em for you. Where are you going to?"

Mr. Trench coughed.

"Er—Mr. Cassidy," said he, "where did you say the German Mail was going to? Hongkong?"

"No, sir; the other way—Colombo, Port Said, Hamburg."

"Of course, of course!" agreed Mr. Trench. "We're going to Hamburg. I'd be so obliged if you'd book our passages for us—first class, expense no object. I'll

give you a hundred dollars commission for yourself, Mr. Cassidy, if you are able to secure us the captain's cabin. You can let the agents know we are ready to pay the captain five hundred over and above our passage money, if he will let us have his cabin for the trip."

Mr. Cassidy drank down his whisky like a man and beamed on the two Americans.

"Begobs! sir," said he, "I must do my duty as I'm bid; but Hiven save me if I can see why they want to be deporting the likes of youse. 'Tis chaining yez to the colony I'd be after doing if I was the Governor; but 'tis being deported yez are, all right. Is there any one yez want to see—any lawyer or the likes?"

"Not a soul, thank you," replied Mr. Trench. "If we've got to be deported, we can only sit tight about it."

"There was an ould Jew down in the hotel office when I come up," vouchsafed the Inspector, "ould Israel Nathan, it was; and I think he'd got wind of the order out agin yez."

"I don't want to see him," said Mr. Trench emphatically.

"Then I'll see that yez don't," heartily assured Mr. Cassidy.



THE worthy Inspector was as good as his word. He allowed nobody to molest his charges at the hotel. Neither would he permit anybody to approach them on the ship. For it was his duty to remain by them until the liner left the harbor.

But the skinny and dirty figure of an elderly Jew haunted their vicinity, like a demented ghost, until the steamer pulled out from the wharf. Even then he was howling and wringing his hands on the dock, and screeching at the hapless deportees to read something and telegraph a reply to him from Penang.

But both Trench and Carrington avoided the shore rail of the ship, and neither of them heard or heeded a single syllable of his screeches. Consequently they knew nothing about the poor man's troubles until Mr. Cassidy had gone over the side into the pilot boat as the great liner swung gracefully into the eye of the setting sun on her course up the Straits of Malacca. A few minutes thereafter, a steward came

along the deck and handed a note to Mr. Trench. He explained that it had been given to him by a crazy old Jew, but that Mr. Trench's friend, Mr. Cassidy, had instructed him not to worry them with it until the vessel was well outside the harbor.

Mr. Trench broke the cover and carefully read the letter within. Then, mechanically, he replaced the missive in its envelope.

"Aleck!" he groaned, "do you see any hayseed in my hair? Is there whiskers on my teeth? Am I moth-eaten or moss-grown?"

"No," replied Mr. Carrington, anxiously, "but you talk as if you was off your onion."

"Guess I'm feeling that way, too," sighed Mr. Trench. "Listen to some of this."

Opening the letter again he slowly read out its opening paragraph:

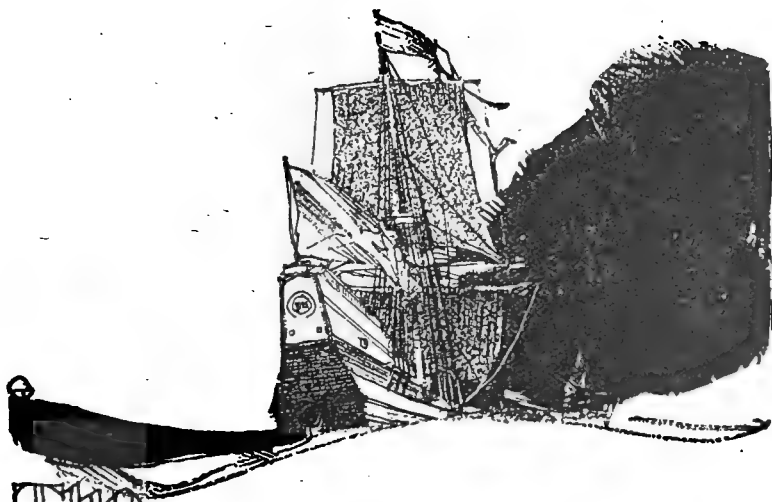
GENTLEMEN: The rubber concessions you have received from the Sultan Ismail are situated in part on the richest tin area in Palinggu. I understand you do not interest yourself in tin mining, and I know there are hundreds of miles of more accessible territory equally well suited for the cultivation of rubber. I will give you five thousand acres of rubber land within ten miles, by good road, of a railway, and \$1,000,000, Mex. (one million Mexican dollars) in exchange for the concessions in Palinggu, which—

"Holy smoke! Bill!" broke in Mr. Carrington, "but that's a quarter of a million American dollars apiece!"

"A quarter of a million American doughnuts apiece!" snorted Mr. Trench. "Didn't I fancy myself for being fifty different sorts and breeds of a 'smart Aleck' when I sold the whole string of sausages to that black and shaven nigger in Palinggu for thirty thousand flat? It's Mr. Alagappa Pillay that will be hitting old Nathan for our nice little million Mexicans!"

"So you've gone and give our little ewe lamb to that black!" sighed Mr. Carrington. "I wonder what it feels like to be handing out million-dollar wads that way. If I was doing it myself, I think I'd have my picture took along with Andy Carnegie and Johnny Rockefeller."

"For the Lord's sake, let up, Aleck!" moaned Mr. Trench. "Come down to the smoking-saloon for a little neck-oil, first; then you might ask the purser if he can put Bill Trench under the care of some steady and reliable wet nurse."



The Queen Sails

A Story of Dick, the Seaman trained by Doricot.

by H.C. Bailey



ALDERMAN FRY was busy as an ant and pompous as a stag beetle. So said the mayor. But he had a name for wit to keep up and a grudge against the alderman who would not buy from his ropewalk. The alderman was inspired by a consciousness of heroism and a year's balance on the wrong side. Not another man in all the corporation of Bristol had ever had to face the loss of a stout ship to the heathen pirates of Barbary. Not a merchant venturer in all England had ever been taken by the pirates and escaped without ransom by the might of his own hands.

So the alderman said frequently and accounted himself the most venturesome of merchant venturers. He was in this comfortable mood, he was strenuously gathering business again into his grip, when there

came to him Nick Antony, the fat old boatswain of many a ship from Cabot's to Doricot's, and Dick Rymingtonne.

The boatswain, as I infer, was doubtful of their welcome: pronouncing that the alderman had no more blood in him than a kippered herring, and opining therefore that he would not remember so well how they had gallantly rescued him as how they had put him in need of rescue; not how they had hauled him out of a Turkish bagnio and borne him safe back to Bristol, but how they had inveigled him upon the voyage that consigned him to that bagnio's slavery. Dick was more hopeful.

"Th' old rogue hath a gleam o' red in his eye whiles," quoth he. "Maybe he can be a fool as well as his betters."

So on a Spring morning of 1560 into Alderman Fry's counting-house Dick Ry-

IN THE previous stories of "Witless Dick," laid in the time of Queen Elizabeth, it has been made plain that the hulking Berkshire shepherd was anything but witless, despite his seeming stupidity. Having saved Gabriel Rymingtonne from a relative's murderous plot to secure his estates and daughter, Dick assumes the name of Rymingtonne, hints that he will return for the daughter when he has made his fortune, and sets out with a Captain Doricot on a voyage to Egypt, incidentally kidnapping the Bristol alderman who financed the venture. The ship is captured, Doricot dies, the others escape.—THE EDITOR.

mingtowne slouched, with Antony rolling in his wake.

"God bless you," he drawled. "How's all wi' you? Ha' you aught a-doing as we can do?"

The alderman laughed.

"Would you kidnap me for another voyage, you rascal?"

"Oh, ay, if 'twas convenient."

"Thou'rt a brazen rogue!" the alderman chuckled. "What's in thy big head now?"

Dick scratched it.

"Naught but to see if you had aught in yourn. Not expecting that neither. You'm but a merchant, after all."

The alderman went on being amused. Such wit was doubtless adapted to him. But I have always supposed that he had that kindness for Dick which surly tempers are apt to learn for him who treats them more surlily. And also he had intentions.

"Art for the sea again?" quoth he.

"There's too many of your kind for me to find a living on land."

"You'll find a living as long as there's a crust to steal, my lad," the alderman assured him. "Are you about a new venture?" Dick looked very cunning and tapped his nose. "Well, would ye have a mind to one of mine?"

"I'll hear of it," Dick drawled.

"The black heathen are the richer by a good ship of mine," the alderman grew earnest, "and I've no will to forget it. Now we saw well enough that a cunning mariner with a crew that would fight could find occasion to harry them soundly. And more profit in the plunder of one of their rich holds than a dozen honest voyages. Why, if your Doricot had not been a mad knight-errant, we had come home as rich as Gresham!"

"We'll have no ill of him that's dead," quoth Dick sulkily. "And died better nor you will withal. Let be. Let be. Well, so you've a mind to make good out of the heathen. I am the man for that."

"So I say," the alderman agreed heartily. "And what will you put to the venture?"

"Not a groat more than myself. Which is a fortune more than you're worth."

The alderman was something sobered by that, but soon they came to concord. And so Dick Rymingtowne went sailing out of Bristol, master of the ship *Reckoning*, which bore a crew half as large again as she needed, and a musket for every man. This seems to

prove that it was Dick Rymingtowne and not Don John or the Dorias who divined that the way for a sailing-ship to meet the galleys in a calm was by the fire of small arms.

II

THEY sailed to shifty breezes and they had but just weathered Lundy when a wind came out of the west and they had to beat against it tediously, seeing much more of the Cornish cliffs than the boatswain liked. But he was, for a fat man, very apprehensive. That is doubtless why Dick Rymingtowne, who had himself no taste for it, clave to him. Dick was wholly cheerful, while the boatswain grumbled oaths continuously. When they saw the open sea to southward, he puffed out relief:

"Praise be, we'm out o' the narrows. Land's a thing I do ne'er want to see unless I be on it," and he cursed the wind again.

"You be thankful for your mercies," Dick grinned, "and you'll see a deal o' land yet this voyage."

With that he put the helm over and the ship before the wind.

The boatswain was for a while speechless. Then,

"You'm making up Channel!" he exploded, which was indeed plain enough.

The pillars of Land's End were already under the port quarter.

"Up Channel it is."

"'Tis a strange road to Barbary, to my thinking."

"There's pirates nearer than Barbary," Dick grinned.

"What's your will?" the boatswain gasped. "You'm never minded to go against the Fowey gallants or the Dartmouth men? Nay, now, nay, hawks'll not pick out hawks' eyes, as the saying goes. 'Tis not Christian, to be sure. And if we do meddle wi' un, us'll never dare show in the west country. And they'm honest lads which never touch naught but foreigners."

"And thou'rt o' the west country thyself, Nick," Dick grinned. "Spare your wind, will ye? I'll leave Devon be, and the Duchy withal. There's pirates both sides o' Channel. I'm for the Dunkirkers. Many a fat bottom running for Antwerp the sharks grab. Well now, if we do lie off and on till we see one which hath filled his maw and

lay aboard him then, we'll have as much as we be like to get o' the Moors and not a week out o' Bristol."

The boatswain stared at him for some time, and then said stolidly,

"Ye could never do it twice. The whole nest o' the rogues would be a-watching for you."

"D'ye take me for a fool? Would I try the same thing twice the same way?"

"Nay," the boatswain grumbled, "'tis not a fool I do think 'e surely," and continued to look at him as though he were a queer invention.

They were somewhere off the Wight when the wind failed. It had been too hot for comfort ever since they made out of Bristol. Now in the calm they had sunshine blazing all day long from a sky that was never blue, and heavy, lifeless air. There was nothing to do but sweat and spit and grumble at the beer. All this they did vehemently. Then a gray blue swell of fog rolled up Channel and engulfed them.

For days they saw neither land nor sun nor stars. The fog seemed to numb the spirit in them as well as their senses, and a crew of rascals as keen as ever left Avonmouth grew dull and listless and whined forebodings. They had some reason. A wind moved in the fog shiftily, and where they were no man knew. It was chance perhaps, perhaps it was the boatswain's queer inhuman instinct for shoal water—he spent days and nights in the bows—that saved them from the dunes and the Gray Nose.

Once they had something like a panic when half the crew swore it was church bells that they heard chiming no more than a cable's length away. But the boatswain pronounced them ship bells, and Dick with fist and foot beat into the fearful that they were making peril out of a fishing fleet from Hastings or Rye. Neither fishing fleet nor church they ever saw, and by nightfall there was a tale afoot that the bells were ghostly, an omen of wreck.

 BUT in the night the fog began to thin. Some of those who kept the middle watch talked of ships' lanterns, others of stars. At dawn they were still alone in a gray cloud, but they could see some little way. Soon after dawn they heard firing to southward. Before noon the fog melted in heavy rain, and away

to starboard they saw white water and a low coast. A freshening westerly wind served them and they stood away, subdued in spirit but grumbling at the Captain who had taken them up Channel into these perils instead of southward. Dick was very genially grim.

Then they saw a lugger, a French craft, making mighty bad weather of it. The *Reckoning* came up on her fast. Her rigging was queer, and soon they made out that her hull had shot-holes.

"There's the girl we ha' waited for," Dick grinned.

The boatswain dashed the rain out of his eyes.

"A hath been fighting, surely."

Dick bade pipe to quarters and said to the gunner,

"Try her with one of your long guns, Jerry."

"Go easy," the boatswain protested. "'Tis thick yet, and who knows what's by? Maybe we'll have all the Dunkirk fleet on us."

"Oh, maybe we'll die if we live long enough."

At the third shot they brought her foremast down. She had not fired an answering gun. They ran alongside and grappled and boarded fore and aft. Her deck was all wreckage and wounded men, more wreck than their fire had made, more men helpless than the crashing mast had struck down. There was hardly a show of fight. Wearily, sullenly, the Frenchmen let themselves be bound. Not many needed bonds. Dick shouted in his bad French for their captain, and a little man with a bloody bandage about his head limped forward.

"Pardon, monsieur. You are a little late. I regret that I could give you no entertainment. Six hours earlier and I should have had the pleasure to annihilate you. I cannot enough regret."

Such graces were not in Dick's nature.

"That's well crowed," he growled. "You go aboard there and we'll come to business."

The Frenchman shrugged.

"I see that you have no soul. It is to me a humiliation."

Dick snarled at him. Dick was not gentle in showing him the way down to his cabin. When they were there, he demanded, "And now—you which crows so fine—what ha' you got aboard?"

The Frenchman made a grimace and a gesture.

"Splinters and blood and death," he said theatrically.

Dick stretched over the table.

"Look'e, my lad, I talk to you polite because you're beat. If you give me trouble, by —! you shall have it. What I want to know will come out as well wi' a knotted cord as fair words."

"My compliments on your politeness," the Frenchman shrugged. "But it is as I have the honor to tell you. There is, alas! nothing of value aboard my ship but the blood of my poor fellows and their death."

"It's a lie," Dick growled, and the Frenchman put up his eyebrows in amused contempt. "You had but just took a ship."

"Perfectly." The Frenchman smiled. "And it will certainly be a great pleasure to you to know that it was of your compatriots. You have therefore the honor to rescue her captain and restore him his cargo. A deed so heroic!"

"Bah! What was his cargo?"

"Alas! you have no *esprit*. Always the man of business. But do not be discouraged. Monsieur can still be heroic, without hurting the feelings of his pocket. The cargo was nothing but tar and faggots. It will be no loss to restore them to your compatriot—whom I wish with all my heart I had never seen. Set him afloat on his tar-barrels; I give you my permission."

"Cargo of tar and faggots?" Dick frowned. "What a plague should a ship do with such?"

"It is what I asked myself. It is also what I asked your compatriot, the red-haired captain. He would only answer rudely that I was a pirate. Which was not apropos. Nevertheless it is as I have the honor to tell you. You will find the tar aboard my poor ship. And also your compatriot. I abandoned his faggots. And his ship, which was indeed no better than faggots."

 AT THIS moment a man came to tell Dick that aboard the French lugger they had found Scotsmen tied up. Dick bade bring their leader and turned on the Frenchman.

"Scots they are. You said he was my countryman."

The Frenchman shrugged.

"Scots—English—you talk the same kind of French. It is all the same. Both of you

—you have no soul, and what is worse, no *esprit*!"

Dick snarled and strode out. The boatswain met him on the poop.

"Have you gutted her?" he grunted.

"There's nought but tar barrels in her, and that's queer, I allow."

"Get the men aboard and cast off and make sail," Dick drawled, and began to pull at his lip.

The boatswain nodded.

"Ay, ay; we'm wool-gathering to be sure."

But Dick brooded over the water. He turned at the grate of a Scots oath, and found himself fronting a gaunt fellow with a shock of red hair who demanded hoarsely where he was and what Dick was and what had come of the French devil. Dick nodded at him:

"Do 'e come and see, my lad," and down to the cabin they went.

The Scot passed the doorway, saw the Frenchman and stormed in French which was chiefly Scots. The Frenchman was a filthy Papist and no seaman at all. He was a treacherous villain in the pay of those idolatrous tyrants, the Guises, a pirate, a hired murderer. Nevertheless it should not profit him or his accursed masters.

Dick scratched his head. It was all mysterious and very interesting. He tapped the Scot's shoulder and said, "Ay, ay, my lad, that's what he is. Now what be you, if you please?"

The Scot was ready enough. He was James Ferguson, out of Leith, captain of the hoy *Agnes*, and captured, crew and all, and his boat pillaged and sunk by the piratical Frenchmen.

"You'll ha' lost a fortune, to be sure," Dick sympathized.

The Scot seemed to hesitate a moment. Then he talked loud of ruin.

Dick nodded. "Ay, ay, tar'll be dear in Leith. And faggots too. But if they be worth so much in Scotland, why would you take 'em to sea?"

The Scot stared at him, desired with an oath to know what affair it was of his; demanded to be let go.

"Let ye go, quotha!" Dick gaped. "To be sure, who's keeping you? Fly away and welcome. I ha' no will to find you victuals."

The Scot was something discomfited. The Frenchman, who understood nothing of their English talk but saw his retreat,

gave a saturnine laugh. Dick allowed himself to grin. The Scot stared from one to the other and then broke out at Dick. They were making game of him. They had some device together. Was Dick English? Let him answer that.

"God ha' mercy! Answer ye!" Dick said. "What's this of devising together? I find you aboard a dirty French pirate that attacked me, and you tell me I be standing wi' he! Am I English? Be you in your senses?"

"If ye be English, ma mon," quoth the Scot haughtily, "look to it what way ye deal by me or I'll hae ye mak answer to your admiral."

Dick frowned.

"Hoity-toity! What ha' you or I to do wi' admirals?"

"Ye'll beat up for Dover and put me ashore," the Scot went on in the same tone, "or it'll be the worse for you later."

Dick looked him up and down.

"You'm not born shy, my lad. For a fellow that's found on a French pirate, you do talk very pretty." Then suddenly he changed his tone. "Fiend, away with you! Would you give me orders on my own ship?"

He shouted for men and bade them take the two away forward and tie them up apart.

Then he went on deck. They were running fast before the wind and the sky was brightening. Not far ahead, hove to, lay some small craft and a big ship. The boatswain waddled up to him.

"Same course?" he asked.

Dick nodded.

"Keep her steady on the wild goose as you might say," the boatswain grumbled.

Dick stared at him stupidly: "What's yon?" he drawled, and pointed to the small craft.

The boatswain puckered his little eyes and looked long.

"North country craft. Scots, I do allow. And what'll they be doing hove to there, says you. They'm on a wild-goose chase like to we, surely."

"Look!" Dick nodded. The Scottish craft were making signals. It was soon plain that they wanted speech of the *Reckoning*. One of them lowered a boat. Dick hove his ship to and waited.

There came aboard a man altogether unlike the surly, blustering captive of the Frenchman, a man very neat, very precise and very bland. He much regretted delay-

ing Dick. He spoke of friendly nations and mariners' good-fellowship. The matter was that in the fog he had parted company from one of his consorts. They were going round from Leith to Southampton with herrings and other matters. In the fog a French pirate had come upon them. There had been fighting, and he hoped that the pirate had been beaten off. But when the fog lifted, one of his little fleet, a hoy, was nowhere to be seen. He was anxious to know whether Dick had sighted her, or, if not her, the pirate.

Dick was as amiable as he; was mighty sorry, but had seen naught. The filthy pirates were the plague of the narrow seas. It was villainous that English mariners should suffer them. But, to be sure, he had seen no pirate, and therefore made bold to hope the best. Very like they had given the knave more good Scottish iron than he could digest. And their consort, which maybe had but lost her bearings in the fog, might yet join them safe and sound. So a cup of wine was drunk and the best of friends they parted.

"Same course?" the boatswain grunted.

"Hold right on," quoth Dick, and drew away and leaned over the bulwarks, according to his manner when he was puzzled.

III



THE puzzle complicated itself.

Why was this second Scots captain so oily? Why was his fleet made up of one stout ship, high-charged and carrying guns, and two little ramshackle hoyes? Why did he say that they were freighted with herrings when there was evidence that one of them had nothing aboard but faggots and tar?

The first Scot was indeed still more mysterious than the second. He was plainly something of a dolt. It was natural that, having lost his temper, he should run wild and babble vain things. But why these particular vain things? Why threaten of English admirals? What had a Scot to do with them? That he should curse the Frenchman who had taken him was wholly natural, too.

But why talk of Papists and the Guises? What should a rover of Dunkirk have to do with religion? All would be fish that came to his net. Why should he care for the house of Guise? They had no traffic with sea or

seamen. And why, in the name of all things wonderful, should a Scot, sailing a little worthless hoy, suppose that the great Duc de Guise cared whether he sank or swam? Had the Guise some interest in faggots and tar? The more Dick thought, the more absurd he found the whole affair. And yet he was the more certain that the secret of it was something in no way absurd, but wholly serious and marketable.

He bade them bring the Frenchman to his cabin and with him a quart of sack. The Frenchman came, and when he was signaled to sit down, yawned profoundly.

"Alas! I believed that I had done with you for a while."

Dick grinned.

"You thought as I had no mind to you."

"I dared to hope so, monsieur. It is the only way you could flatter me."

Dick filled him a mug of sack.

"You thought as I could make naught of your joking at me."

"I trust,"—the Frenchman spoke with some anxiety, but stopped to drink, "I trust from my heart that I was not wrong. Do not tell me that you understood me, monsieur, I beg. That would be humiliating."

Dick guffawed.

"We'll get on well, you and me."

"You become familiar," said the Frenchman coldly. "You have no delicacy. Let us understand one another. You have destroyed my ship. I wish you all the ill in the world. I will mock at you with pleasure. I would destroy you if I could. Otherwise I will have no relation with you."

"You wait, my lad. Look 'e, I shot down your mast, but your lugger was as rackety as a hen-coop before. The Scottish guns had done her business. Now what if I was to help you to a tit for tat with the Scots, and maybe what would buy you another boat?"

The Frenchman stared.

"You babble, my friend. What good would that do you? And you—you are a man of business."

"If I could do without you, to be sure I would not want you," Dick grinned. "But there's that which I can not see through of myself. And if you stand with me, I'll play you fair. 'Tis the use of your wits I want."

"Monsieur, I can well believe it."

"And what you know o' Dunkirk and Boulogne and Calais."

"Monsieur, I am a Frenchman and not a traitor."

"Well, and I am English," Dick grinned, "but I could be a traitor as well as my betters. You're frightened o' bogies. But you wait till I ask you for treason. 'Tis this Scot troubles me."

"A blot on the world, monsieur, I confess."

"What was he doing with his faggots and tar? And there's more of these Scottish hoys with the same cargo. And with them the one high-charged ship which fought you. What's the plan? A ship o' guns with a string o' tenders all faggots and tar. What's that mean but fireships?"

The Frenchman opened his eyes. The Frenchman stared long and then drank deep and said,

"Pardon; you are not altogether without intelligence."

"Ay, but who's the fellow they mean their fireships for? That red-haired lubber, he said you was hired by the Guise. Why would he think the Duc de Guise wanted him scuttled? Was he in a plot against the Guise's plots? What's the Guise to do afloat? He's no sailor, as ever I heard."

The Frenchman broke into a cackling laugh. He held out his hand.

"Monsieur, my excuses! You have genius. It had escaped me. I see it all. *Mordieu*, it is a plan! There is a brain somewhere in these Scots."

"'Tis you to play," said Dick.

"I conceal nothing. I rely on your honor. But, monsieur, at this hour, the Guise at Calais makes ready to send his niece, Queen Mary, back to Scotland. His brothers, M. d'Elbœuf and M. d'Aumale and the Cardinal of Lorraine, they are to sail with her. You perceive? These fireships, they are to destroy her. They come from the rebels of Scotland."



DICK rubbed his big chin. There was a queer, humorous light in his eyes. He saw well enough now. Many there were in Scotland who had no desire that Mary Stuart should ever reign. Many in Scotland—and perhaps some in England. Would Queen Elizabeth be lost in grief if something happened to her sweet cousin Mary on the voyage? Was the English fleet standing by to watch the issue of the plot? That would explain why the Scotsman babbled of English admirals.

"Seems to me I ha' something to sell to M. de Guise in Calais," Dick drawled.

"You would venture?" the Frenchman cried. Dick grinned at him. "I offer myself to assist."

"I've a notion the Guise will pay a better price to a man as is no Frenchman."

"You do not trust me, monsieur?"

Dick grinned.

"Well, to be sure, if you had me ashore in France you might be tempted. And I wouldn't go to lead any man into temptation."

"You do not trust me!" the Frenchman cried tragically.

"Well, say as I would rather ha' you trust me. And you can. But I'll go into Calais alone."

When Dick went on deck the Frenchman was with him. The wind held still, but more lightly. The sky was cloudless and mellowing. Away to westward, off the cliffs of Gris Nez, they could see the Scottish ships beating to and fro, questing still for their lost consort. The low French coast came nearer, all golden in the evening light. The walls and turrets of Calais, the crowded masts stood close. Dick altered his course and bore away to northward. He looked over the side.

"Tide'll be setting up the straits awhile yet."

"It turns at sunset," the Frenchman agreed."

The Scottish ships, it seemed, had resolved that their search was hopeless. They gathered together and were standing eastward in the wake of the *Reckoning*. She passed Calais and still held on, steering as though she were bound for Antwerp or some port in Flanders.

"To be sure, there's naught suspicious in us," Dick grinned.

IV



NIGHT fell. Land and Scottish ships were lost. But the *Reckoning* hoisted no lantern at mast or bow. There was no glimmer of light from her. She lay with all sails furled, silent and dark on the dark water, drifting on the ebb tide. Back with the tide she came, till the lights of Calais were abeam. Then a boat sped from her shoreward.

Dick steered on the glowing beacon that marked the harbor mouth. As they drew

near, they heard a cry from it, and the clatter of men in a hurry. The land closed upon them on either hand and they were challenged. Then a pinnace came crashing alongside to a medley of shouts. Lanterns blazed. The boat was held fore and aft.

"Who are you that break the laws of the port? No boat enters Calais harbor by night."

"News for the Duc de Guise, my friends," quoth Dick placidly. "News for the Duc de Guise out of England."

"Who brings it?"

"Dick Draper, a mariner out of Rye. Oh, none that the Duc knows, but news which he hath need to hear. News touching Queen Mary."

"If you know so much, you ought to know that M. le Duc is not at Calais."

For a moment Dick doubted his Frenchman. But he let no doubt show as he answered:

"Well, and he has brothers to speak for him, hath he not? You're doing him ill service who keep me from speech of them."

"You shall have all the speech you need," came the answer. "Tow them to the bastion."

At the stone steps of the bastion they were bidden land and there were huddled together by halberdiers.

"Keep them in guard," cried the truculent voice from the pinnace. "You—the captain—Draper—what do you call yourself? Come aboard."

Dick came at his leisure, drawling out,

"You ha' no call to be aught but civil. I came of my own good will, out o' good will to you. I——"

He was struck down to wallow in the stern sheets.

"Keep that for the Cardinal."

In a moment they came alongside a big, low craft, a galley gleaming with light from every cabin. The truculent master of the pinnace swung aboard, was gone a little while and came back to drag Dick after him. Firmly held between two soldiers, with the master of the pinnace leading, Dick was brought to a cabin where sat a clean-shaven man all red robes.

He was plump and handsome; he smiled generously, but there was something cruel in his face. Dick guessed him the Cardinal of Lorraine—fancied that to cardinals one ought to kneel—concluded that he had best not know too much of what he ought

to do, and so, the soldiers permitting, plucked off his hat. For the rest, he looked stupid.

"Dick Draper, out of Rye, if you please," he said, and gasped as one overcome by greatness.

"You are condemned to be hanged, Dick Draper," said the Cardinal pleasantly. Dick gaped. "If a man comes to Calais by night it is the law of the port that he is hanged from the bastion. You knew that, doubtless?"

"Now that's hard, surely," Dick whined. "Me which came to help the Guise and Queen Mary."

"You are benevolent, Dick Draper," the Cardinal smiled. "Well, my friend, you have put your neck in a noose. Why?"

"For to serve you, to be sure. And to turn a penny for myself, I don't say, if you will be so good. Why else, my lord?"

"Why else is in effect the question," the Cardinal smiled. "The Guise knows how to reward service, though it is but the service of a Dick Draper. And also how to punish treachery, though it be but Dick Draper's."

Dick gave a roar of laughter.

"Treachery, says you! Me in an open boat with six mariners! What treachery should I do? Nay, I bring you news." Though the Cardinal's smooth face did not change, Dick saw that he was doing well. "You hear me, and say if hanging is what I am worth."

The Cardinal laughed gently:

"I shall not hesitate, my friend. Go on."



BUT as Dick opened his mouth, a woman swept into the room. She was silver gray and white and black. She was very lithe and slight, so that she seemed rather a phantom of light and shadow than a mortal body. Yet she bore a woman's graces finely wrought, and for all her fragility she was not small, and strength was alert in her. Her face was thin and pale, but of a calm beauty. It told nothing of her nature. It had in its mystery a compelling charm. Her hair flamed bronze and gold beneath a cap embroidered with pearls.

"Why, who is this, my lord?" she cried sharply.

"I am finding out," the Cardinal said. "I doubt he is nothing," and looked a wish that she should leave them.

But Dick cried out,

"Is that madame the Queen? I ha' news for you, madame, if you please. News out of England."

Mary of Scots looked him over and it seems that he drew himself up and stood square. He must have been a sturdy, lusty figure of a man for all his loose limbs. She smiled.

"Speak out then, good fellow." The Cardinal made as if he would rise, but she stayed him with one thin hand on his shoulder. "Speak out. Have no fear."

"Which, by your leave, I ha' not," said Dick, and she smiled a little. There may have been a laugh in his eyes. He went on with his tale adroitly. "It was in the fog. There came into Rye a Scottish hoy which had lost her way. And the captain, calling himself Jamie Ferguson, he fell a-drinking in the taverns and he talked."

"Wait!" the Cardinal broke in sharply. He waved his hand to the soldiers. "You may go."

Dick was left alone with Cardinal and Queen.

"He is not very terrible, I think," she smiled.

Dick's lazy eye gleamed at her.

"There's those in Scotland think you terrible, madame, so it seems. For they ha' no mind that you should ever come there." He saw her hand close on the Cardinal's shoulder, a spasm in her face. "This fellow, this Jamie Ferguson, let out as he came from Leith and two other hoys all laden with faggots and tar, and a big ship with guns. And the plan is that when you do sail for Scotland, madame, o' some calm night, the hoys should be brought foul o' your ship and set o' fire. For they hope to do your business so, or else the other, the big thing, taking you in your confusion will sink you wi' her guns. That's my news, madame."

The Cardinal bent his brows and looked Dick through and through. The Queen's face was drawn. She bent and whispered to the Cardinal's ear in Latin:

"You see—these Scotsmen—already they would murder me. If I go, I go to be sacrificed."

Dick did not understand, but he read her fear plain.

In the same language, in the same low tone, the Cardinal answered,

"It does not become you to fear. You

are of the blood of Guise."

She drew in her breath. She took her hand from his shoulder. She stepped back a pace and stood erect.

"You forget yourself, my lord," she said. "I was born a Queen."

And Dick, who had understood nothing, saw that her fear was gone.

The Cardinal bent his head, showing no resentment, sympathy or other feeling.

"I think it likely you have spoken truly, Dick Draper," he said. "Your tale matches with rumors we have heard of others. Else I might not have believed it. What do you want of me?"

"What it's worth," said Dick sharply. "Would you say five hundred pounds was too much for a Queen?"

"You shall be paid," the Cardinal spoke with careless contempt. There was a moment's pause and then for the first time Dick saw something genial in his face. "If I read you right, you are something better than a seller of tavern talk."

"There's more than talk I've to sell, to be sure," Dick grinned. "Now as I came across channel, I saw the Scottish hoys and their big ship lying in the offing here waiting for you. Well, you'll be wanting to sail quick. Though you be ready for the worst they can do, you'll not want to take madame here upon more risk than needs be. So then, give me a fast-sailing lugger for the open boat I came in and I'll make an end of those fireships. To-night, if the wind serves, we'll aboard them, the morrow night o' the latest—it's but two or three men they carry—we'll put the torch to them. Is that worth another five hundred pound, my lord?"

"You expect me to trust you, then?" the Cardinal smiled. "Prithee, Dick Draper of Rye, why should I not send out my own men?"

"And if they fail of it, if the big ship takes them, here's a pretty tale for madame's coming to Scotland—how her uncle sends out o' Calais pirates to harry honest Scottish boats. Nay, let me go and if I burn 'em, all's well; and if they take me, as they will not, 'tis no blame o' yours. None would call me French."

"I think not," the Cardinal laughed.

"Well, then. If your sentries on the bastion see a blaze at sea to-night, you are to know the sea's clear for madame. If there's no fire till to-morrow night, you wait till

the day after. But if you see naught before then, send out and sweep the sea yourself."

The Queen laughed merrily.

"He gives us his leave, our Dick Draper."

V



AND so, an hour before midnight, Dick sailed out of Calais harbor in a French lugger. The sky was clear, but by good fortune the moon was not to rise till close upon dawn. The wind held still. He had picked his half-dozen men well, and whatever was in their heads they were content to obey without babbling. The first difficult business was to find their own ship. The Scotch craft were easily seen, for they, fearful of fouling each other, bore their lanterns like honest boats. But the *Reckoning* was lost in the night. The boatswain had his orders to keep her a little to windward of the Scots, between them and the land. Dick's lugger beat to and fro some time while he fumed in rare impatience, before a high poop loomed up above her and they hailed discreetly and ran alongside.

It was the Frenchman he sought first, and the Frenchman rushed upon him, crying,

"What fortune? What fortune?"

Dick held off his exuberance, one big hand on his shoulder.

"Ha' you a mind to earn yourself another boat and a hundred pound?"

The Frenchman laughed at him.

"Have I a mind? Have I a mind to my salvation?"

"Well, maybe you had best do without that," Dick grinned. "How many men was there o' the hoy you took?"

"Four!" the Frenchman swore and spat. "No more than four. It was the big fellow that did our damage."

"Four, and there's a dozen o' your fellows fit to fight. Well, then. Take them aboard that Calais lugger and run down close on the hoys. I'll answer for the big ship. When you hear my guns, lay aboard the hoy that's nearest and master her and set her afire. Then the same wi' the other. It should be all done in half an hour, if you be smart. Fireships, to be sure! We'll give them fireships! And when you've done your business, steer nor'east and you'll find me wi' a hundred pound for you."

The Frenchman stared speechless. It is certain that the terms were generous. You may wonder why Dick chose to let the Frenchman share his profit. I wonder why, since he had his money safe, he took the trouble to do anything. But after all, when he made a bargain of his own choice, he preferred as a rule to stand by it. I think he had a taste for the Frenchman. I am sure, from queer hints in his papers, that Mary of Scots was one of the few women who waked in him emotions.

The Frenchman began to gush thanks and boast, and was swiftly checked.

"I'll give you a barrel o' powder to help the fire along. I'll give you pikes and cutlasses for your men. God bless you, I'll give you those Scotchmen that you took. For maybe they'd be a nuisance to me."

So the surly Scottish captain and his two men were flung into the lugger's cabin. With her crew of Frenchmen all quivering excitement, she drew away from the *Reckoning*. A mile away to leeward the lights of the Scottish flotilla dipped and twinkled.

The *Reckoning* made sail while Dick talked to his gunner. His long guns, demi-cannon, had a range of some three-quarters of a mile and threw a thirty-pound shot. He wanted to put the big Scottish ship out of action, yet take no harm himself. It was idle to risk firing at full range by night. There was some chance of damage if they ran close. I suppose that Dick cared little whether he failed or not. He felt it worth trying to see whether he could do it and for the sport of it. Since he had nothing to care for but running away, he had no fear of the issue. And chance and his gunner brought him success.

The *Reckoning*, all dark, ran as close to the lights as the gunner asked, and, as she passed, fired all her broadside of six. Its thunder was still rolling over the sea while her youngers scurried aloft and shook out every stitch of sail. Before the wind the *Reckoning* drew away fast. Dick conceived that he had risked enough for the sake of his emotions.

But there was no need of haste. No gun answered that broadside. When the *Reckoning* drew clear of the smoke, they saw that the highest lights of the flotilla were blotted out. They heard the crash of falling timber, and shouts. A moment more

and a tongue of flame leaped out of the sea. The Frenchman had fallen to his work.

The glow astern faded out into the dawn twilight. The breeze freshened and on the *Reckoning* they shortened sail. Soon the Frenchman's lugger came chasing them and a jovial shout brought the news. The big ship had her mainmast shot away. The hoys had been burned and all was well. It was to be expected that the big fellow would drift ashore between Calais and Gravelines. The *Reckoning* hove to and the lugger ran under her quarter, and Dick tossed a bag of money aboard.

"God bless you, and you forget you ever saw me. I'll swear I never saw you," he cried, and the Frenchman waved his hand and bade him, "*Au diable; au revoir!*"

Then the *Reckoning* went about, and keeping in mid-channel, or something to the English side, beat westward again.

 THAT afternoon, as the wind was falling toward sunset, a great galley and two high-charged ships passed them, steering northward. Through the flood of light they saw the standards of Scotland and France. Mary Stuart had bidden her last farewell to the land she loved. Dick stood a long while gazing after her, and only turned when the boatswain tapped him on the shoulder and pointed to sails ahead.

They came on fast, and soon they were made out English ships of war.

"God ha' mercy, here's the admirals," Dick grinned to himself.

They started signaling from afar. They sent a boat to board him, and a lordly creature, Admiral Winter, was obsequiously received. Dick's ship had come through the straits? To be sure, out of Flushing, sailing for Plymouth. Had she seen any Scottish craft? Why, there was a galley and some big ships flying both Scottish blazons and French—very haughty and grand. Admiral Winter betrayed impatience, even bad temper. He seemed to dislike excessively the tale of those standards of Scotland and France.

"Begging your pardon, surely," Dick protested. "You did ask what I seed."

"I saw that myself, fellow," said the Admiral tartly. "Have you seen naught else under a Scottish flag?"

Dick scratched his head.

"To be sure there was a fellow yester-

day, a big ship with some queer little tubs about him, hailed to ask if I had come upon French pirates. They did snap up one of his tubs seemly and take her into Calais. But I seed naught o' they, thanks be. And no more o' he, neither. Maybe they got he too, last night."

The Admiral muttered an oath and turned away without courtesy; then checked himself and came back to bid Dick forget all about him.

"Why, that's hard too. So fine as your honor is," Dick protested. "But to be sure I ha' never seed you, nor you I neither.

See! there's the Frenchy-Scotty galley," he pointed northward. "She'm well away, to be sure."

The Admiral, with another oath, went over the side, Dick humbly attendant.

"So that was his talk of admirals," Dick communed with himself. "England was in the play too. Well, God ha' mercy, she hath beat England this game;" and he watched the little fleet, now tiny dark things on the horizon.

So Mary of Scots came safe to her realm and the *Reckoning* sailed away to her proper business in Barbary.



\$1000.

The "Tucson Terror" Unfortunately Robs a Bank

by
Rob Reed
McNaguy

LONNY ENSINGER, locally and colloquially known in the Cocoonino country as the "Tucson Terror," had had a proprietary eye on the Sun Bank at Ten Strike for some moons. The managers of said thriving institution, while in no sense aware of this interest, had similarly had their eyes on a location spoken of as "parts unknown."

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the sit-

uation; it was a hard season and the bankers' call proved the more urgent. And so it was that when the Tucson Terror descended on what he regarded as his legitimate prey about 9 p. m. of a hot day, the gentlemen most interested were moving in a direction north $35\frac{1}{2}$ degrees east with the bulk of the bank's deposits to accelerate their speed.

Lonny found a thousand dollars in "cen-

tury" notes when the safe door fell off. One thousand dollars; no more, no less. Enshrouded in a blue haze of vocal disappointment and pistol-smoke, the mortified bandit departed hastily southward with an ungrateful populace at his heels.

Chief and hottest of these was "Bullnose" Spear. Bullnose—the name was qualifying rather than descriptive—had a thousand dollars in the Sun Bank, or thought he had, at the time of the events just narrated. Now a thousand dollars is a thousand dollars to any man, but to Mr. Spear it represented considerably more than mere figures in a red-inked pass-book. He had saved it in a heroic effort to convince Mamie Conners, a "biscuit-shooter" at the Palace Eating-House, that he could provide, and that handsomely, for two as well as one.

When he found his credentials slipping from him he swore a mighty oath, picked up the first object that came to hand—by great good fortune it was a sawed-off shotgun—and led in hot pursuit.

Lonny was nursing a black anger. In the sand-hills south of town he shook off the pursuers until he rode alone. But his rage and humiliation would not be shaken off. Perhaps he, too, had nursed a hope of marital felicity, or of a long-drawn and superlative orgy in some far-off spot so effete civilized as "St. Looy." At any rate he rode madly.

At Oride, thirty miles away and somewhat off his range, his nerves were still feverish with the disappointment, and he tarried to seek solace at the Ne Plus Ultra bar.

Oride was insular, travelers said. It resented the careless manners of the outside world, and looked with severity on imported haste and brusqueness. In the Ne Plus Ultra, the Terror, grown careless in his brooding mood, accidentally jostled a native son. The native happened to be a bad native son, but the principle stood. He commented politely but definitely on Mr. Ensinger's irregularity of ancestry and manners, and generously offered so to remedy them that friends would have to "put him to bed with a shovel"—or words to that effect.

Lonny had early taken as his life motto the adage, "Double-actions speak louder than words." It was a good motto for his business, and he wore two of them at his hips for just such emergencies as the present

one. When he had ceased his exposition of this great truth the belligerent citizen was but a passing memory, and several of the innocent bystanders were on a fair way toward an early grave from lead-poisoning.



NOW the Terror had both wit and discernment, along with other less commendable gifts. As soon as his evidence was in, he stopped. Quick to read the disapproval in the faces about him, and sighing at the unreasonableness of the world in general, he departed through a rear window, leaving his hat and one pocket of his coat in the hands of an impetuous local officer.

The sheriff of Oride was a capable man. He had qualified for office by shooting the gold-fillings out of a local bad man's front teeth at a matter of fifty paces, and the taste of danger was to him sweet as the dreams of the lotus-eaters. For more than a week things had been deadly dull, wherefore he hailed the news of Mr. Ensinger's defection with tears of joy. With a hurriedly enlisted posse he rode eastward on the Terror's trail at three o'clock.

As the chase settled down, the more thoughtful withdrew gradually, until behind the doughty sheriff labored only two trusty retainers. With these aides he pushed the pace cruelly. He had heard news of the Ten Strike outrage just before starting, and he shrewdly reckoned that the man before him rode a jaded mount.

Lonny knew the dangers of his position. He was in new country now, a hilly strip a hundred miles southwest of Holbrook and across the great *mesa*. The trails were strange and his horse was beginning to show the wear and tear of the night's hurry. For half an hour he had been aware of the click of shod hoofs among the rocks far in the rear. They grew louder momentarily. Just as breaking dawn began to strengthen the ghostly outline of things he paused beyond a jutting corner of rock, set his sights for half a mile, and shot an incautious deputy out of his saddle and a two-hundred-dollar salary.

Not pausing to note the effect, he rode on hurriedly.

He did not know of the looting of the bank prior to his own appearance, and it annoyed him that these bloodhounds should hang on so persistently for a paltry thousand dollars. He felt disgraced and shamed

by running away with so trivial an amount. The Terror of Coconino County fallen to petty thievery!

Humph! It tasted bitter in his mouth. He did not even consider the impetuous citizen of Oride whose lamp had flickered and gone out so suddenly. The man had faced the inevitable; with his careless tongue and more careless gun-play he, as Lonny would have said had he thought of it at all, "had it comin' anyways."

But other things tried his patience now. Conchito, his mare, was struggling along desperately; he knew she could last barely an hour more, perhaps not that. The trail grew each moment more rocky. And that devil of a sheriff and his companion clung on like sand-fleas! But worst of all, the mockery of that pitiful wad which had led him into all this trouble burned into his pride and seared it.

"A thousand dollars!" he muttered. He'd show 'em yet, of course; but to think of it—a measly, miserable little thousand dollars! He had cleared that many a time in a little cattle deal down on the Pecos. He turned and swept the track behind with a bitter eye. "And drat it all, they're still hangin'—"

He pitched lightly in his seat, toppled for an instant, and then fell forward, alighting on his feet. Conchito, good *caballo*, had set a weary foot on a loose rock. Like a dead stick it snapped and the beast went down groaning.



LONNY turned with a cat-like litheness and looked at her. A glance was enough, but a sudden moisture came into his hard eyes as he stared at the poor thing struggling up again. When man and laws and even Fate had raised hand against him, Conchito had ever been true. To the last she had struggled on, faithful.

But now as she half stood, half leaned, looking at him, across the little plateau a Winchester began to pump spitefully. The hot lead sputtered about the two. Lonny bit his lip but did not turn. His lean brown hand stole down toward the holster at his thigh.

"Conchito," he murmured tenderly. "You—the last—"

His gun cracked suddenly at his side. The horse staggered to her knees and crumpled. With a dry lump in his throat, the

Terror turned and ran stiffly across the little clearing to a heap of boulders and rocks against the side of the bluff. It was characteristic of the outlaw who had killed two men within the night calmly, scientifically, that he should waste precious moments to put his suffering steed out of her misery.

The luck which up to now had broken against Lonny Ensinger seemed to veer into his favor again. Without a scratch he reached the heap of rocks and scraggy brush, and dropped from reach of the whining bullets.

It had been an ill-fated night for him. In the first place the bank with its paltry returns; the innate quarrelsomeness of Oride; the stern, unfaltering persistency of the men with guns below; and last of all the loss of Conchito. He grew livid again at the unreasonableness of his pursuers.

Beyond on his fallen mare the empty Winchester hung useless in its boot. The two men below still had theirs, as the occasional crash indicated, and they were *not* out of ammunition.

"About five rounds fer th' sixes," he smiled a wry little straight-lipped smile. "An' then— But what gets my goat is that sheriff an' his little measly thousand. Th' jasper's jes' bound—"

He sat up suddenly alert.

For a time the rocks below, where lay the enemy, had been silent. Lonny calculated. He had only a gun-fire acquaintance with the sheriff, but the persistency of that individual had won his respect, if not his regard.

"He knows I ain't all in, by a whole lot," reasoned the young man aloud. "An' I reckon 'e knows 'e can't smoke me out from over thar."

His logic seemed sound up to this point and he rolled a cigarette moodily; the nerve of that fellow was provoking.

"Wherefore," continued the Terror thoughtfully, "he pauses an' makes heap medicine. Then 'e looks up at these yere rocks above."

Lonny's eyes shifted skyward, and of a sudden he paused intently. Something in the bulging, rugged face of the cliff behind centered his attention.

All was silent below. Mr. Ensinger took in his position rapidly. To the right, a monster boulder blocked his path. To the left, and sheltered from below by lesser

scrub and rocks, his way lay open for a dozen yards.

"Now," reasoned the bad man, with a diplomacy which had saved his epidermis on half a dozen occasions, "I'm due fer a killin' most likely, but L. P. Ensinger would be safer a whole lot if he weren't right where that Sheriff person expected 'im to be!"

To think was to act. After a brief period of strenuous caution he reposed at the extreme limit of his boundaries to the left. Behind him for a matter of thirty feet the cliff wall ran up sheer. But at a point directly above his earlier position a crook in the wall made a bare two feet of ledge visible. If the sheriff acted as Lonny reasoned he would, he must move around to that exposed spot for his shot.



IT WAS a good half-hour before anything stirred. Then the gun below began to speak again. The man above was moving round to his position, thought the Terror. This was only an effort to draw his fire and attention.

It was another ten minutes, and it seemed an hour to the man who had "reckoned he was due fer a killin'." Then at last for just an instant the head and shoulders of a man were visible against the red rocks of the ledge.

Lonny caught his sights calmly and pressed the trigger. The gun clicked.

At the sound the target vanished like a shadow. Bitterly the watcher cursed the Fate that had all through the long night tried to destroy him. To have been so near, and then— With rage-trembling hands he ejected the shell and placed another.

"Now—" But his opportunity had gone. With the patience of a sphinx he watched and waited, but nothing showed again.

But steady! As his eyes bored into the corner above he made out something. It was only the faintest hair-line of a thing—a mere shadow—but undeniably not a part of the rocks themselves. Painfully he studied it. A dozen times he looked at it and away again to clear his sight. And finally he reasoned it out.

The sheriff was crouching in the hollow round the corner above. The ledge was narrow and he knelt along it to rest. And now, faintly but surely round a jutting rock,

which shut off the view of each, protruded the slightest, merest fraction of an outline of the man's advanced knee.

Lonny sighed regretfully and lay back among his cover. To shoot at what he saw was vain. With one chance in a thousand of reaching his mark, the consequences in the event of such a center shot would be negligible. Its only value to him lay in that he had his man located.

Almost petulantly he lowered his weapon and studied the rock formation above. The corner was out of sight—or rather the part he most wanted was. On the other side, extending out toward him, the wall bulged and bent irregularly, rough-torn out of the mountain-side.

Lonny smoked another cigarette, his eyes fixed dreamily on a white quartz knob protruding a bare four feet from the corner. Then suddenly he smiled. He glanced back at the hidden spot. The outline had not moved. With a new eagerness he brought his forearm up again, trained his sights on the quartz knob, and pressed evenly!

Had one asked him what a ricochet was, he would probably have confessed frankly that "he never et none of them French things." But he did understand the plain and idiomatic "glance," and the alert mind jumped at the idea. As rapidly as he could fan his triggers he pumped twelve shots into the spot he had selected.

As the second gun dropped from its last shot, a strangled cry and a movement on the ledge above answered. The hidden figure writhed into view for an instant and then came over the cliff. Among the rocks a dozen feet away it thudded limply and was still.



LONNY eyed it cautiously for a moment, glanced up at the spot above which had put the proper angle on his bullet, and coolly fell to reloading. The gentleman among the stones would never again bring his persistence to bear on a man-hunt or other human problem. He smiled dryly at the relief of it—and two from three left one.

As he shifted to drag another cartridge from his belt, somewhere on the boulder-strewn plateau off to the right a Winchester spoke wickedly. The bad man grunted. Over his face spread a surprised, wondering look. Down, way down below the waist-line an oddly numb feeling had stricken

him; not unpleasant, but new and strangely out of place.

He reached for another cartridge feebly and his hand dropped in his lap. Something sticky was seeping out upon it, he knew, but he couldn't understand. The numbness was spreading. He struggled to lift his gun-hand. It, too, had suddenly grown terribly heavy and—why, it was red! Blood! At the sight of it the Terror gripped his ebbing senses. Understanding flooded back upon him.

"Why—'e got me! Th' ——— got me!" he said wonderingly.

For a moment he studied the gaping hole above the groin and watched the widening stain. With an effort, he half turned his head. The shot had come from the right and behind; he had forgotten that other chap in his mental tiff with the sheriff. His eyes fell quickly to the wound in front again.

"——! He dum-dummed his bullet," he whispered with withering scorn. "Th'—th' mis'able coyote!"

He was fast numbing all over now. He wished he might have another crack at that dog who "dum-dummed" his bullets for a man. He didn't care so much for this finish, or the thousand dollars. A ghastly grin masked his face as he looked across at the sheriff and thought of that thousand. The little roll of bills lay at his side, where he had dropped it earlier.

Hurriedly he reached for it. And the dum-dum chap would have that for his trick, he thought hazily. The hard lips set again with sudden resolution, though the eyes flickered wearily.

"Not any," he muttered thickly. "Not——"

He unstrapped a holster clumsily and crammed the rumpled wad of bills far down into it. It didn't seem as if he would ever get that done; and the numbness in his groin and legs was overpowering the rest of him. Why, he could hardly—— His body swayed a little and settled. Over there behind, where the shot had come from, he dimly heard pebbles rattling under foot.

With final determination he tossed the holster from him. He settled back slowly

and his thumb twitched upon the raised hammer of his gun—it seemed a little easier this way, but he felt kinda——



A HEAD came slowly into view over a bush and looked at the huddled figure. A rifle lay alongside the head, but after a silent survey it dropped. The figure advanced cautiously until it finally stood beside the fallen Terror.

"Dead," muttered the owner of the head. "Dead, by golly! And Bill over there asleep, too. I wonder"—he pushed the limp figure with his boot—"where that money——"

It may have been the kick that did it. We don't know too much about these things, and Lonny Ensinger was probably dead, as the other said. But a six-shooter roared suddenly on the ground beside him, and echoed back and forth among the crags of the little plateau. The man bending over him gasped and closed up like a knife, then toppled across the prostrate body.

For several days the buzzards and coyotes were very busy.

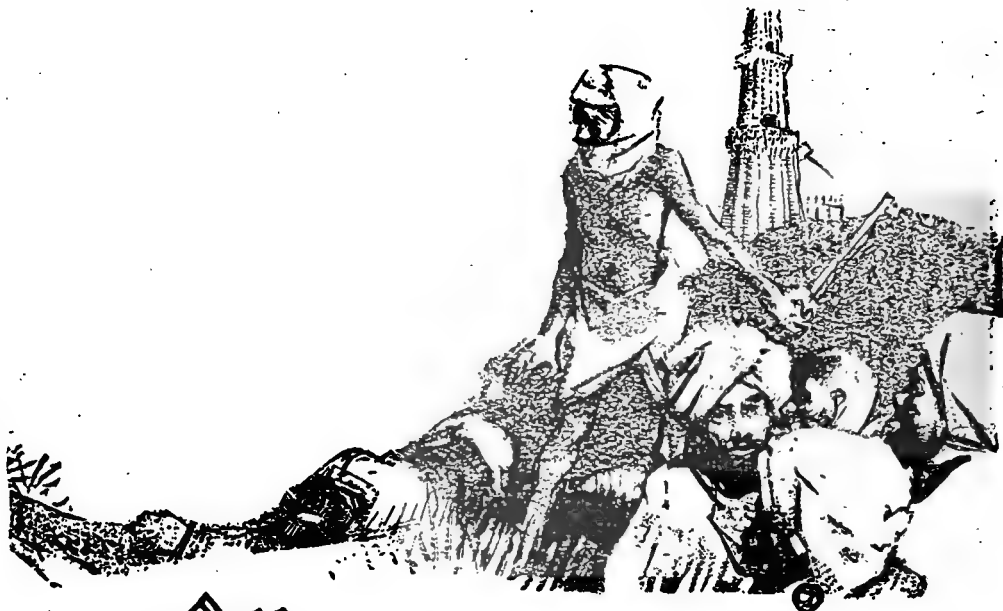


A MATTER of eight months had slipped by on the little plateau. A lone prospector, with a face bleak as the hills, sat on a stone and eyed three heaps of bones along the cliff wall. Carefully he pieced together the little story.

Moving across toward the sheriff he picked up a mildewed object. On examination it proved a weather-eaten and much-gnawed bit of leather, a pair of rotting-out rivets betraying its sphere of bygone usefulness. As he would have tossed it away a rivet gave and the flap fell back. It was wadded with a spongy lump of green!

Bullnose Spear looked at the remains of the departed Lonny, at those of the sheriff, and the third man. Last of all he examined the little pile on his knee again.

"A thousand dollars. Three thirty-three apiece," he mused. "Well—the Tucson Terror sold big, but th' shuriff 'n' Blucher didn't hardly bring all they was wo'th—Hum!" The eye strayed back across the little battlefield thoughtfully. "I reckon me an' Mame know whose that thousand is!"



An Object Lesson

by W. Henry Francis

THE Burmese are cowards, every one of them, and it is perfectly useless trying to persuade me they are not!"

"My dear Warden, I know it is useless. That is why I don't try."

The first speaker struggled angrily with the cords that bound him to a pillar, but finding that his efforts only made matters worse he stopped. His companion, who was tied to the next pillar, never moved.

"What a patient chap you are, Doctor!" Warden remarked. "Don't you want to move your arms and legs?"

"Yes, badly," was the reply.

"Then why don't you?"

"Because I can't."

"Poor old Levan! I can—just a little—but it is infernally painful, and it must be worse for you with your wound."

"My own sufferings always seem to me worse than other people's."

"I wish I could take it as you do," Warden exclaimed, "but I am angry. If I weren't trussed up I would run amuck like a mad Sepoy. I bet I'd put an end to some of them before they scuppered me!"

"No doubt you would," Levan agreed. "And that is why they have tied us up so tightly."

He was unable to repress a groan.

"I'm sorry, old man!" said Warden. "It is my fault. So is all the rest of this wretched business."

But Levan did not hear. He was hanging against his ropes in a semi-unconscious state and his head had fallen forward. Warden glanced around in a vain search for help, but in this great, deserted monastery there was none. From end to end ran a double row of teakwood pillars, tall and tapering like the masts of ships.

Their tops were shrouded in gloom, for the sun was setting. Between the rows at

the farther end was a giant image of the Buddha, carved in alabaster, seated cross-legged and smiling. There was nothing else. The dacoits had left in frantic haste as soon as the last knot was tied, and no one had been near them since.

 PRESENTLY there came the sound of a man shouting in the far distance. Another voice answered. The sounds grew louder, and, at last, the whole air was filled with shouting and laughter and cries of triumph. Men were telling of the deeds they had done.

"He shot me in the arm, but I killed him!" cried one. Another shouted, "I got his rifle and all his ammunition!" While a third was repeating over and over again, "I got a mule! I got a mule! I got a mule!"

They reached the monastery and began to tether their ponies to the high piles on which it was built. Amid all the commotion it was difficult to catch individual phrases, but it was clear to Warden what had happened to the remnant of his small force. And here was he, the commander, with Levan, their doctor, roped to pillars in a monastery.

His gloomy reflections were disturbed by a groan from his companion.

"Water! For mercy's sake, water!" Warden burst into an angry roar. "Water! Bring water, you sons of dogs!"

There fell a silence on the crowd below.

"Water, you dogs! Water!" roared Warden.

Then there came a creaking of the ladder and men began to crowd about the door, peering in. Some few carried Martini-Henry rifles, but for the most part they were armed with *das* and spears and old flintlocks.

"Bring water. Quick, quick!"

There was no pleading in Warden's voice. He spoke as though he had an unquestioned right to command and was not used to being disobeyed.

The sight of a man bound and helpless shouting orders to his captives in an angry and determined manner that threatened untold penalties if they did not obey him on the spot, tickled the Burmese sense of the ridiculous. One of them came forward, laughing.

"We had forgotten about you," he remarked.

"Bring water," Warden insisted.

"They are bringing it," the man replied, and drawing his *da* he was about to sever Warden's cords when another hindered him, saying,

"He fought like a demon."

"Will you fight?" asked the first, hesitating.

"Yes, I'll fight the whole — lot of you!" replied Warden. Then, nodding his head in the direction of Levan, he added, "Look to him."

They left him and turned to their other captive. There was no fight in him, so they cut him loose and he fell in a heap on the floor. The water arrived at that moment, and some one filled a coconut-shell and put it to his lips, while an old man knelt down beside him and began to rub his legs and arms.

Warden looked thirstily at the water, and a struggle took place within him. Not a drop had passed his lips all day. He swallowed dryly and wondered how long he could bear it. He could hear Levan drinking greedily. This was too much for him.

"Give me water," he exclaimed.

But it was a request, not a command.

The man who had first entered held the coconut mug with its long wooden handle to his lips, and Warden swallowed the contents in a few huge gulps.

"More!" he cried, and the mug was filled again.

"Will you fight?" asked the Burman when he had finished.

"No," said Warden.

It was the word of an Englishman, and next moment the ropes were at his feet and he was stretching himself and rubbing his aching arms and legs.

II

 AN HOUR later the two men were seated on the ground beneath the monastery, eating boiled rice off a plantain-leaf with their fingers. All around were scattered groups of Burmese similarly occupied.

"We might be in the midst of an army," Warden remarked, glancing about him.

"We are," mumbled Levan with his mouth full of rice.

"And they told me at headquarters that all the country was clear west of the river! Like a fool, I believed them, and so—well,

here we are. I wonder if any of the men have escaped?"

"If they have, it will only be to die of starvation in the jungle. That would have been our fate too if you had not tried to carry me away after I was wounded."

"How is it?"

"Painful, but better since you dressed it for me."

The rice was finished, and they sat back and watched the chattering groups round the camp-fires.

"How they do talk!" remarked Warden, mechanically taking out his cigarette case.

It was empty, and he held it open for Levan to see.

"They must have got plenty among their loot," the latter suggested.

"Shall I ask them?" said Warden.

He turned to speak to the nearest group, when his eye fell on a khaki bundle lying in the shadow of a pillar.

"Where there is loot there may be cigarettes," he remarked, rising to his feet.

Silence fell on all the groups of Burmese near by. Evidently they were keeping a strict watch over their prisoners, and Warden hesitated.

"They think I'm up to something."

"Never mind. Go quite openly," urged Levan.

Warden strode across to the bundle and seized hold of it, but withdrew his hand with a startled exclamation.

"It's a man! A dead man!" and he began to drag it into the light.

"Who is it?" asked Levan, as he struggled to his feet, helping himself with his uninjured hand.

Warden was stooping down over the body:

"It's Evans. Color-Sergeant Evans!"

"How he must have fought!" exclaimed Levan. "Look at his wounds."

"Poor chap! How awful!" Warden cried. "Look at that—and that! They just hacked him to bits. The cowards! The miserable, skulking cowards!"

And in a frenzy of rage and grief he turned and cursed the Burmese who were crowding round.

In a moment there was an uproar and a score of *das* were out of their sheaths.

"Keep quiet, Warden! Do you hear me, keep quiet!" Levan urged frantically.

But Warden was past control. He felled

the nearest man with a blow of his fist and seized his *da*.

"Come on if you dare!" he yelled. "Cowards! Cowards!"

There was a momentary hesitation among the crowd, and Levan, with a sudden inspiration, seized it.

"Bo Tha!" he called loudly. "Bo Tha!" and a voice from the outskirts of the excited crowd replied,

"Who calls Bo Tha?"



LEVAN had drawn a bow at a venture, and, by luck, had hit the mark.

Bo Tha, the most renowned leader of dacoits in all the kingdom of Mandalay, was here, and if any man could save them it was he. Whether his mercy would be kinder than the fury of the mob was a thing that no man could foresee. But, at the worst, a respite had been gained.

The crowd made way and Bo Tha came forward, moving slowly. He was slightly taller than the rest and the lights of the camp-fires flickered on his keen, biscuit-colored face, and on the white linen fillet that bound his hair.

"What has happened?" he asked, and was answered by a babel of angry voices.

With upraised hand, he imposed silence on his excited followers.

"Let one man speak and the rest keep silent!"

One man spoke: "Lord, he called us cowards."

"Who called you cowards?"

Fifty accusing fingers pointed at Warden.

"Why did you call them cowards?"

His tone was cool and his glance rested calmly on the angry Englishman.

"Call *them*, indeed!" shouted Warden derisively. "I call them, and you, and every man of your race a coward!"

An angry shout greeted this outburst, but Bo Tha stilled it with a gesture.

"To-morrow," he said, and his voice was still quite calm though his eyes glowed dangerously; "to-morrow I will show this foreigner that we Burmese are not cowards. Let no man harm him to-night. He is my prisoner!"

He was gone, and the crowd melted again into scattered groups. The whole incident had come and passed in a few seconds, and Warden, still hot and angry, was left standing with his back to a pillar in a truculent and threatening attitude.

"Come one, come all, this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I."

Levan spoke with mock admiration, and Warden lowered the point of his sword, looking bewildered and a little foolish.

"Well, I'm——!" he began slowly.

"So am I," Levan agreed.

Warden sat down, grumbling angrily to himself:

"So that's Bo Tha, is it? Well, I gave him a bit of my mind anyway. He's going to show me that Burmese aren't cowards. I wonder how he will do that. It will take some showing."

"The same old story," groaned Levan.

"Yes, the same old story. My dear sir, I've seen too much of it not to know. As soon as a Burman has fired a shot he bolts like a hare. Do you call that pluck? Give me a man that will stand up and fight!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Levan. "I want to go to sleep."

III

 NEXT morning at an early hour Warden was being shown how to load and prime an old and rusty flintlock. It was a slow business that required careful measurement of powder and much energetic use of the ramrod. The result hardly justified the time and trouble spent on it; for Warden, after taking careful aim, missed the trunk of a large tree at sixty paces. It was his fifth miss, and he explained irritably to the spectators that an old flintlock was an utterly unreliable weapon, unfit to be compared with the Martini-Henry in precision, not to mention the difference in the rate of loading.

Levan, looking very anxious, kept his eyes on Bo Tha, who appeared to be deeply interested in Warden's lecture. What game was he up to?

"Will you try another gun if you do not like that?" asked the Chief.

"No. I have tried three, and I expect the rest are much the same."

"Yes, much the same," Bo Tha agreed. "You may take which you want."

"I don't want any of them, thanks," said Warden.

"You will soon," returned the Bo, "for you are going to fight me."

"Oh, am I?" exclaimed Warden.

"Yes. You will be the Burman and I shall be the Englishman."

"What do you mean?"

"You will know very soon. We shall fight down there on the plain."

At the foot of the hill on which they stood the river made a wide bend, leaving a stretch of level country some two miles long by half as broad between it and the steep hillside. Here and there were fields of millet growing eight to ten feet high; but for the most part clumps of bamboo alternated with open grass-land.

"Suppose I try to escape?" said Warden as his eye followed the winding river.

"We have your friend," replied the Bo, and Warden grunted.

The choice being offered to him, Warden elected to start from the eastern limit to avoid having the early sun in his eyes. He chose the best of the three muskets he had tried, and was given a powder-horn, a spare flint, and a piece of cotton cloth to make wads.

"Which gun do you take?" he asked.

"This one," replied the Chief, as one of his men handed him a Martini-Henry rifle, and a bandoleer full of cartridges.

Levan sprang to his feet.

"No. That's not just!"

But Bo Tha turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Just!" he cried. "Who speaks of justice? Was it just to take our country? Is it just for English soldiers to fight with rifles against men armed with *das* and spears and these old guns? You did it because you were strong and we were weak. To-day I am strong and you are weak! Enough! Enough!" and he strode away down the hill.

Warden called after him,

"I will fight, but will you let my friend go free?" To which the Bo replied, speaking over his shoulder as he went,

"He is a doctor and we may need him; but afterward he may go—and teach his own people justice!" he added as an afterthought.



FOR an hour Levan sat on the hill-top, among a host of armed Burmese, watching anxiously for any sign of the combatants. At last he saw Bo Tha crawl on his stomach across an open patch and disappear into a clump of bamboos. The position was well chosen, for there was a wide belt of open grass-land that Warden must cross to reach him, while a

slight rise in the ground gave him a good view.

Presently an undulation in a field of millet caught Levan's eye. It might be a straying buffalo, but evidently Bo Tha thought otherwise, for Levan caught sight of him for a moment through the bamboo branches as he changed his position.

The undulations approached the edge of the field. Levan guessed the distance to be eight hundred yards, far too great for flintlock but within easy range of the Bo's Martini-Henry. Then the millet parted and Warden appeared, standing upright in the opening.

"Fool! Fool!" muttered Levan in agony, and immediately a shot rang out.

It was a miss, and Warden rushed forward, seizing his opportunity while the Burman was reloading to take cover in a small ravine. For some time he was invisible, and then his head appeared about a hundred yards nearer. A shot struck the ground a yard to his left. He sprang out of the ravine, ran some thirty yards and threw himself flat on the ground as his opponent fired for the third time. Then he continued to advance by short rushes, and each time a bullet threw up a pinch of dust within a foot or two of him.

The distance between the two men was now little over a hundred yards, and Warden lay on the ground panting, sheltered partly by a mound of earth. Suddenly, to Levan's astonishment, Bo Tha rose from his concealed position, ran forward into the open, halted, fired, and missed. He stood fumbling with his bandoleer. The temptation was too great for Warden, who drew a bead on the standing figure.

Levan, on the hillside, saw through the Burman's ruse.

"Wait! Don't fire!" he screamed, but his voice was lost in the distance, and the flintlock's loud report told him that Warden was at the mercy of his enemy.

Then Bo Tha commenced to play with his victim as a cat plays with a mouse. He let him rush to cover and begin the long process of reloading, while he followed more leisurely. Then, as Warden was measuring out powder or tearing a piece of rag for a wad, he would place a shot within a few inches of him and start him running again.

Levan realized that all these misses were intentional and that before the reloading was complete a well-placed shot would put an

end to the duel. He could bear the sight no longer: filled with some wild idea of stopping the fight, he ran down the hillside, pursued by an angry crowd of shouting dacoits.

As he ran, the report of another rifle-shot reached his ears; but he was on the level now and could no longer see what was happening. Then came the voice of Bo Tha calling,

"Send the doctor here!"



AT LAST he came upon them, Warden lying on the ground and the Chief bending over him. Levan threw himself on his knees beside his friend and began to examine the wound. The bullet had entered his chest and come out behind, but so far as Levan could discover it had not touched a vital part. He rose to his feet.

"Tell your men to carry him into shelter. He can not lie here in the sun."

"I have a raft waiting for you," replied the Chief; and, at a sign, the others raised the wounded man and carried him to the river.

Moored to the bank was a large raft with an awning in the center, and the first things that met Levan's eyes as he stepped on board were his medical panniers. He pounced on them and began to take out instruments, dressings and bottles. Everything was there.

"Did you do this?" he asked.

"I thought you might want them," replied the Bo.

"I do! I do!" said Levan. "Here, help me—take these," and they carried the things under the awning.

Warden had recovered consciousness and the Chief went to his side.

"I meant to hit you in the shoulder," he said, "but you jumped."

"I was jumping a ditch when I was hit," Warden replied feebly.

Levan interrupted them with an order not to talk, but the Burman's eyes were asking a question, and at last Warden answered it.

"I know why the Burmese run away," he whispered.

"Then tell your people," said Bo Tha. "You will be with them to-morrow."

He turned and left them; and as he stepped ashore, the men in charge of the raft pushed out into the stream.

The Widow and

the Man- Hunter

by
Stephen Allen
Reynolds



I’D BE very glad indeed to have you drop in on me almost any day,” Godfrey Parr informed me over the cigars and cognac. “But you mustn’t expect too much, Clarke,” he went on with a smile. “Detective work has its romances and thrills now and again, that’s very true; but work—hard, digging, unromantic work—paves the way to most of the spectacular successes which you hear of from time to time.

“My International Bureau of Investigation has all kinds of cases on its books; that is, we handle almost everything except divorce work. We leave that to the small fry. We block swindling schemes, restore property, rope thieves, trace forgers, and chase embezzlers around the world. I have no bullies or watchmen on my pay-roll, and in that respect I fancy my organization differs from most detective agencies.”

Seated in the cozy grill-room of our club, we had just finished an excellent dinner, and had been discussing detective work in general. I knew Parr, not only as the successful head of a famous detective bureau with

representatives all over the world, but also as a companionable club-fellow.

I always fancied that Parr’s work was both dangerous and interesting. I should have been glad to hear of some of his adventures from his own lips, but a feeling of delicacy restrained me from speaking to him of “shop” matters until I had known him for fully three years.

“Suppose you stop in to-morrow,” he suggested as we parted that night. “I can’t really promise you anything exciting, but we can lunch at Savarin’s, and something worth while may turn up before the day is over.”

I ENTERED the outer office of the successful man-hunter just in time to see him bow out a charming little person dressed in black. She dropped her veil as she passed me, but not before I looked straight into a pair of winsome gray eyes and noted a tear on either cheek.

“Who’s the lady with the eyes?” I inquired as I appropriated the most comfortable chair in the inner office and accepted one of Parr’s Havanas.

"It's a little woman that I pity from the bottom of my heart," the detective answered. He pondered for a few moments and then continued, "I'm rather doubtful whether or not I can help her to any great extent, but I'm going to make a strenuous effort or two."

He picked up a gaudily engraved certificate from his flat-topped desk and studied it for fully a minute.

"I've a certain amount of respect for a burglar who breaks into a rich man's house," he continued. "Such a man takes his life in his hands, and for the sake of a few hundred dollars' worth of plunder faces death or a long term of imprisonment in the event of detection. I also respect, in a measure, the highwayman who sticks up a train single-handed.

"It's all wrong of course, but it's certainly a human weakness to admire brave men who take big chances even along dishonest lines. The burglar and the highwayman might be said to be the lion and tiger of the underworld; and"—he tapped the certificate significantly—"these sneaking scoundrels who keep just within the letter of the law while swindling needy women are just as surely its snakes."

Parr's eyes narrowed as he emphasized the sibilant end of the sentence. He turned toward me. Involuntarily I hitched nervously in my seat, for it seemed as if a stranger had faced me.

"The lady who just left is a Mrs. Adelaide Saxon, an Englishwoman," Parr went on, speaking rapidly. "She's the widow of an officer of a Hussar regiment. While on his way home to England after seven years' service in Burma, enteric fever laid him low. For various reasons Mrs. Saxon had remained in England, and during the first year of her husband's absence had given birth to a little girl. Captain Saxon was in no condition to fight the fever, and lived barely long enough to complete the journey and greet his wife and daughter. After the estate was settled the widow found herself in possession of a little over ten thousand dollars in cash, paid to her by a life insurance company.

"Had she invested this money in some high-grade security it would have been her best course. Supplementing the meager pension granted her by the British War Office, such an investment would have given her an income large enough to have kept

both her daughter and herself from actual want. But she was ambitious on account of the little one—wanted her to take up music and painting and all that sort of thing; so when a smooth-talking solicitor happened around within a day or two after her settlement with the life insurance company, she had a ready ear for a fascinating line of copper-mining talk. Unfortunately she had no one to advise her, and within a week she was the possessor of ten thousand shares of non-assessable stock in The Montana Copper Mining and Milling Company."



PARR tossed the certificate toward my side of the desk. I noted that it represented one thousand shares, and that a batch of similar certificates lay before him.

"The par value of her holdings is supposed to be ten thousand dollars, and the agent faithfully promised big, quick returns. She waited some time without receiving any dividends, and then called upon the London agent. The company maintained offices in Butte City, New York and London. The agent put her off with promises. He spoke vaguely of increased expenses due to tunnel sinking, which was to uncover a rich lode. He told her that the time was not far distant when the stock would jump to double or even treble its par value, and requested her to exercise patience.

"Finally, as she saw her slender fund of ready cash dribbling away, she made up her mind to seek work. After a weary search she found a post as social secretary. During the evenings she took up stenography and typewriting, and in due time became proficient enough to increase her earnings.

"Then came more visits to the office of the London agent of the copper company. She grew to distrust him, and demanded that he return her money. He refused to even entertain such a proposition. She then asked him to buy in her stock at a substantial discount. He turned a deaf ear to her. She then threw good money after bad by retaining an English lawyer to look into the matter. He was honest, it seems, but couldn't do anything for her because the company really owns a hole in the ground in Montana, and carries on its operations in a lawful manner.

"A few months ago, the English lemons

having all been squeezed dry, the London agent closed his branch office and left England. Mrs. Saxon's attorney thereupon wrote to the New York office demanding an accounting. In reply he received a carefully worded communication neatly typed upon an expensive letter-head. It asked all stockholders to exercise patience for at least six months. The letter was signed 'Falerno Paillard, Secretary and Treasurer.' Her attorney waited three months and then wrote again, asking for a report. He received no reply.

"About this time, Mrs. Saxon visited our London office to see whether we could help her in any way. She hadn't money enough to pay us the usual retaining fee, but our English representative took a deep interest in the case and wrote me the full details. I was very busy at the time on an important case, so I didn't have an opportunity to take up the New York end of the matter in person. Instead, I detailed my Denver man to look into the matter.

"In due time he reported that in all probability Mrs. Saxon would never see a penny of her money again. The mining company had been incorporated in a lawful manner. It actually owned certain property in Montana. A small force of men was kept at work—ostensibly employed at sinking a new shaft. Enough low-grade ore was mined and sent to the local smelter to pay the wages of the gang of active workers.

"Now, notwithstanding the fact that the whole scheme is an out and out swindle, the stock selling is still going on right here in New York. The rascals are keeping just within the letter of the law. They're far too clever to declare a dividend out of the subscription funds; and it would appear that no action can be taken in behalf of any of the victims.

"Some time ago the gist of this information was conveyed to the English widow through my London agent, together with my regrets that we seemed powerless to aid her in any material way. She refused to accept my opinion as final. She decided to come over in person. Thereupon she resigned her position, turned some jewelry and trinkets into cash, placed her little girl with an aunt, and embarked upon the *Cedric*. The *Cedric* docked this morning, and my lady taxied right up here to tell me that she was going to beard the lion in his den. And—there we are!"

"But what can be done for her?" I ventured. "The case seems to be an open and shut proposition. You're up against a big stone wall, are you not?"

Parr shrugged his shoulders. He studied the lighted end of his cigar as if an answer to my question might be read in the glowing ash.



"IT WON'T be the first stone wall I've encountered," he finally muttered, as if speaking to himself.

"When The International Bureau runs up against one of these walls, it looks first for either a loophole or a gate. Sometimes it burrows under walls; sometimes it scales them. Occasionally it blasts its way through a wall. Getting by walls is one of our specialties—diplomacy or dynamite—it's all one to us."

"And what will the lady do in the meanwhile?" I asked.

"It's not decided yet. I've made her promise to keep away from the offices of the Montano company until I can give the matter a little personal attention. I've sent her up to a hotel where she's to wait until she hears from me. Unfortunately, I couldn't promise her any results, but I hadn't the heart to refuse her—particularly after the tears came."

"I suppose you are taking the case on a contingent basis?" I ventured, semi-sarcastically, for Parr was noted for his liberality and readiness to head subscription lists.

"Clarke," he grumbled in response to my sally, "if you had been in here while she told me her story in detail, you'd have been feeling for your check-book long before she finished. You'd have taken all her stock at its face value."

"And she would have promptly refused any such offer," I declared, mindful of a proud expression upon the face of the Englishwoman. "If there is any way in which I can help, I'll be glad to," I added.

Parr pressed a button under the edge of his desk, and conferred briefly with the answering subordinate. He then selected some business cards from a tray and handed one of them to me.

"I'll take you at your word, Clarke," he smiled. "Maybe I can make a detective out of you. We'll visit the offices of the mining company for a starter. You will pose as 'Mr. Weldon,' a salesman of wild-

cat securities. I will be 'Mr. Somers' of Chicago, in town for a few weeks with a select list of farmers and others who go in for gold-bricks, three-card monte, and ten-cent shares of oil stock. You will remain quiet after I introduce you. Take your cues from me. I want to have a chat with this man Paillard. During the talk I can size him up and possibly plan a campaign. No doubt we can get him to promise us a liberal commission for placing some of his copper stock."

"The man will be too clever to commit himself in any way," I objected. "He's probably such an old hand at the game that he'll fight shy of strangers."

"If a man drills deep enough, sooner or later he'll strike oil," Parr returned. "We begin drilling to-day, and we're going to keep right at it until we strike something worth while. In other words, we're going to get this man Paillard, if it takes us a year. If we can't get him one way we'll get him another, but we're going to get him *right*—or I'll retire from business!"

II



THE New York offices of The Montano Copper Mining and Milling Company consisted of two rooms upon the twelfth floor of a Broadway office building. A boy and a female typist presided over a copying-press and some oak furniture in the outer office. The inner room contained an elaborate series of filing-cases, a handsome mahogany desk, a choice rug or two, and some comfortable chairs. A bewildering array of framed blue-prints were strung around the walls, while at one end of the room I noticed a large-scale wall map of the State of Montana.

At the desk, seated in a position facing the outer office, I saw a dark-complexioned, suave person of possibly forty or forty-five years of age. His flowing beard was black, his manners unctuous. His English was very good, although characterized by the usual staccato accent peculiar to Latins who learn to speak our tongue after reaching maturity. His restless brown eyes constantly flitted from Parr's face to mine while the detective engaged him in conversation.

When an opportunity offered itself to scrutinize Paillard more closely I availed myself of it. I noticed some faint dots upon his forehead. They appeared rather bluish

in color. Although his hands were almost constantly in motion while he spoke, I fancied that I saw similar dots upon his right hand and wrist. These marks were rather faint, however, and appeared as if an effort had been made to obliterate them.

Parr soon succeeded in winning a part of Paillard's confidence, and after the latter had promised the detective a liberal commission on all sales of the copper stock, Parr pocketed some literature and agreed to look up prospective purchasers. He then turned the conversation into a different channel. He spoke almost at random, it seemed to me, skipping from one subject to another. It did not dawn upon me until some time afterward that he was skilfully drawing his man out.

Parr spoke brilliantly of near-shady experiences in various parts of the world. I had always known that he had been a great traveler and a close observer, but his fund of intimate knowledge anent the doings and whereabouts of world-notorious swindlers was a revelation to me. Paillard seemed charmed to meet such a man of the world. In his turn he spoke of many strange lands and experiences, although at no time did he hint of a past connection with a crooked proposition of any kind.

He claimed to have been a practical miner, and related actual experiences in Alaska, South Africa and Mexico. Singularly enough, although I failed to notice it at the time, Paillard was not very specific in his reminiscences. He made no mention of cities or towns save in a general way. Nor did Parr press him for names or dates. The man-hunter was biding his time.

The conversation continued for some little time until Paillard chanced to state that he was a Spaniard by birth. Thereupon Parr apologized to me, and spoke to the other in Spanish, a language of which I knew next to nothing.



WHEN the interview came to an end, and the polite secretary-treasurer bowed us out of the private office, I perceived Parr glance sharply at a pale-faced young woman who was busily employed addressing envelopes in the outer room.

"It looks as if we'll have to kidnap his typist for a start," Parr observed as we gained the street. "Mrs. Saxon has the nerve and the ability to hold down the posi-

tion, and I think I can turn the trick when the present incumbent takes her lunch to-morrow. It seems that her chief work is addressing envelopes, and I don't imagine she gets a very big salary. I'll have a little chat with her and offer her a better position. Then, if the gentleman with the powder-marked face is worried about the non-appearance of his regular stenographer it's quite possible that he might engage the Englishwoman—particularly if she just happens to be canvassing his building about the time he receives a note from the regular girl stating that she has suddenly been taken ill and finds it impossible to return.

"If the scheme works, Mrs. Saxon will be invaluable to us, and we'll soon have the black-whiskered Spanish swindler with the Franco-Italian alias where he undoubtedly belongs. In all probability he's badly wanted in some part of the world. It's up to us to find out just where, and how badly. If we can nail him through Mrs. Saxon, it'll be a rather poetic revenge—particularly if we can get some of her money back for her."

At noon the following day, while the English widow was waiting at Parr's headquarters, the detective accosted the typist while she was lunching on an ice-cream soda. He quickly put the girl at her ease and then ascertained that she was earning but seven dollars weekly. After Parr had taken her partly into his confidence it required but very little persuasion on his part to induce her to accept another position at a higher salary. She also agreed not to return to Paillard's office, but to send a note pleading illness instead.

Early that afternoon, with a grim smile of satisfaction, Parr hung up his telephone receiver and informed me that Mrs. Saxon had secured the position.

"She slipped out to phone me as I instructed her to," Parr explained. "He beat her down a dollar, too, the wolf. He saw that she needed work badly, and so forced her to start in at six dollars a week—a beginner's salary."

The detective bit off the end of a cigar, and then thrust it into his mouth. Savagely scratching a match, he fired his cigar. The hard expression had swept over his face again.

"'Who's Who in Hades' is getting to be a mighty bulky volume, but there's still plenty of room among the P's," he concluded.

That evening after office hours Adelaide

Saxon informed us that with the exception of an occasional dictation from Paillard her work consisted of addressing envelopes to prospective victims. Parr directed her to keep her eyes and ears open, and to report to him daily, bringing with her carbon copies of any important letters written.



AS THE days passed by she obeyed his instructions to the letter, but unfortunately all of the letters were of a non-committal nature. Nothing apart from the usual routine work of marketing mining stock developed. We learned, however, that to all intents and purposes Paillard was the whole company; that the president had died some time before; and that the board of directors were mere dummies who allowed their names to be used in return for a small fee.

Taking a deep interest in the case, I was usually present at the meetings between the widow and the detective. I was curious to know what method Parr would use to force a restitution; but I failed to see that the widow's reports threw any light on the subject, as none of her daily data tended to incriminate her employer.

About ten days after her entrance into Paillard's service, Parr learned where the Spaniard lunched. Upon the day following, as he was igniting an after-lunch panatella in front of his favorite café, a photographer chanced to be upon the opposite curb of the narrow street, his camera trained upon the restaurant. As Paillard gained the entrance of his office building he failed to notice a second operator half concealed by the newsstand at the door. The roar of busy Broadway drowned the click of the shutter; the operator was a block distant before Paillard reached the elevator shaft.

Three hours later, two batches of unmounted prints lay before Parr. A fair three-quarter view of the Spaniard had been obtained, together with a remarkably sharp photograph of his profile. That evening, Parr dictated a circular letter which described the personal appearance of the Spaniard.

Among other things, the letter spoke of the powder-marks. The concluding paragraph was a request for telegraphic information at Parr's expense. This letter was multigraphed upon the letter-head of The International Bureau of Investigation, and copies addressed to police officials in

various parts of the world. An unmounted print from the profile negative of the promotor was enclosed in each communication.

I recollect that one copy of the letter was sent to Cape Town, another to Johannesburg, three or four to Spain, two to Alaska, a half dozen to different points in Mexico, and quite a number to various cities in the western part of the United States. It looked to me like a long trail leading to nowhere in particular; but when I spoke to Parr and likened the proposition to that of looking for a needle in a haystack when it was uncertain that the needle had ever existed, he told me that he felt fairly certain that some one of the letters would bring results. Even at that, I failed to see how Paillard's apprehension was going to help the Englishwoman unless his cash was located and attached.

"I can't describe the sense which tells me that Paillard is wanted somewhere," said Parr. "Women call it intuition; gamblers call it a 'hunch.' I have no name for it. This fellow is a pretty smooth article. Unless I'm badly mistaken he's burned his fingers some time or other, and that's taught him to keep within the letter of the law. In all probability he's still wanted somewhere. We'll just keep on drilling."

III



PARR'S circular letter brought forth results within a week in the shape of rather indefinite telegrams from different points. A wire from a county sheriff in Idaho conveyed the information that a powder-marked ex-convict answering the general description of Paillard had squared his account with the State, having been found guilty of stealing high-grade ore. He had completed his term of imprisonment some years before, and was no longer wanted.

A telegram from Yuma, Arizona, stated that the black beard depicted in the photograph might possibly conceal a large scar on the left jaw. Should such a scar be found, the suspect was without question identical with one Ramon Cerrillos, a powder-marked Mexican sentenced to life imprisonment about ten years previously. Cerrillos had stabbed a prospector. After serving but three years of his sentence he escaped. A conniving section-foreman and

a hand-car served to help him make the escape a clean one, and the penitentiary at Yuma saw no more of him. Arizona was willing to pay a reward of a thousand dollars for his apprehension.

In a general way, Paillard's description and photograph tallied with that of one José Delgado, who had been sentenced to death for shooting a *rurale* in the Mexican State of Sonora. Delgado had been in the mining business, was powder-marked, and had made a sensational escape from the prison at Hermosillo while awaiting execution. The Mexican police stated that Paillard's photograph closely resembled Delgado's appearance—allowing for the time elapsed since the commission of the crime. Delgado had worn no beard, but on the other hand, he was said to have been of Spanish nativity.

About the time of his arrest, the thumb and finger-print system had just been introduced into Mexico. The police were in possession of Delgado's prints, and Parr was requested to secure thumb and finger-prints of his man to be forwarded to Hermosillo for comparison. A liberal reward was offered for the apprehension of Delgado.

In due time a communication arrived from Cape Town. Paillard's description was somewhat like that of a Spaniard or Italian who had partly served a sentence on the Breakwater for illicit diamond buying. This man stabbed a guard and made his escape. The wounded guard managed to shoot the escaping prisoner in the back, but did not succeed in stopping him. After the elapse of some time, the authorities learned that the convict had been sheltered and nursed in a Cape Town thieves' resort. His wound healed, he had been smuggled aboard a tramp steamer and gotten out of the country.

The old practise of branding the letters "I. D. B." upon the persons of buyers of stolen diamonds had long since been done away with, but the colonial police assured Parr that if Paillard was the man they wanted, the scar of the bullet wound would be found on his back. Their man was powder-marked, owing to a premature explosion in a quarry where he had once been employed. A small reward was offered, and further information requested.

A telegram from the Commandant of the Northwest Mounted Police at Dawson informed Parr that a dark-complexioned,

powder-marked individual was wanted by the Canadian police for a mining fraud perpetrated during the year of 1898. This man, known as "Don Federico," had a previous prison record, and fortunately the police had a record of his Bertillon measurements. Parr was requested to secure and compare the Bertillon measurements of Paillard with a chart which he would receive by the earliest mail.

"It seems as though powder-marked criminals are very plentiful," I commented after reading the message from Dawson.

"Paillard can't possibly be the person they *all* want," Parr returned. "The dates and circumstances don't agree. I have to find out whether or not there's a scar under his black whiskers, or on his back. Then I may have to get his Bertillon measurements and his finger-prints. I won't deny but that I've got a stiff job cut out for me, but it's more than likely that Paillard is one of these four. In that event we may not get back the little woman's money for her, but we'll put the promoter where he can't swindle any more women. Possibly we can save something for her out of the wreck."

"How in the world are you going to get his finger-prints and find out about those scars?" I asked.

Parr chuckled, and then replied, "That's simply a question of a day or two and a little expense. It looks as if I'll have to hire a couple of 'rough-necks,' but the circumstances warrant it. We detectives have to break the laws ourselves from time to time. Some of our cases require drastic methods."

That week proved to be an eventful and trying one for Falerno Paillard. Naturally, I could not spend all my time at Parr's elbow, but the detective kept me posted, and I laughed with him over the promoter's several mishaps.

The barber at his hotel first annoyed him by clipping his beard much closer than was usual. The incident was closed, however, by the discharge of the offending barber after an exchange of repartee with the indignant customer.

 THE next evening, Paillard left his office and sought his favorite café for an appetizer—a daily habit. Shortly after dusk he left the establishment and headed for the elevated-railroad station. As he was passing by the entrance

of an old office-building, two rough-looking men seized him and dragged him within doors. While one of the men held a huge bunch of waste to the promoter's mouth, the other produced a razor. With a few deft sweeps he slit the clothing from neck to waistband, and then flashed an electric pocket lamp over the bare back of the prostrate man.

After a brutal question as to why he had left off his chamois belt of loose stones, his captors were scared away, seemingly, by some slight noise. Wondering what jewelry salesman the thugs had taken him for, the angry Spaniard found himself alone with his ruined clothing. He rode to his hotel in a taxicab, thankful that his watch and pocketbook had been overlooked.

"And the bunch of waste that the rough-neck stuffed into his mouth was *oily*," observed Parr with a wink, as he concluded the story of the hold-up.

Upon the morning of the day following, Paillard boarded an elevated train. Shortly after leaving the station a sudden commotion took place in his end of the car, and to his intense surprise and disgust he was conducted to police headquarters and charged with pocket-picking. A gold-filled watch which he had never seen before was found in his coat pocket, and a fellow passenger of respectable appearance claimed to be the owner of the watch. Furthermore, he declared that Paillard had deliberately squeezed up against him and picked his pocket.

In spite of his protests Paillard was measured, photographed, and locked in a cell. He dispatched a messenger for a bondsman, but before the latter appeared he found himself arraigned in the Tombs Police Court.

Singularly enough, no one appeared against him. He was informed that a well-known pickpocket had been observed leaving the same train at the Brooklyn Bridge station. Undoubtedly this crook had slipped the watch into Paillard's pocket during the disturbance. The gentleman who lost the watch had withdrawn his complaint. A contrite lieutenant of police apologized to Paillard for the arrest and detention, and he was set at liberty.

"There's no scar on his jaw, no bullet wound on his back," grumbled Parr as we started for the Spaniard's office one forenoon a few days later. "His Bertillon measurements don't correspond with those

of the man wanted in Dawson. Worst of all—those dummies at headquarters neglected to take his finger-prints when they had him there. I can't have him grabbed again very well. As it was, I strained a point to have that pinch framed up on him so I could get the measurements. If he's taken down there again on a fake charge he's liable to put up a squeal that'll hurt some good friends of mine at headquarters. I've simply *got* to have those finger-prints, though; and if everything works well I'll have 'em in less than an hour."



WONDERING how Parr intended to get the finger-prints of the wily promoter, I accompanied him to the offices of the wildcat corporation. I held my peace, knowing by this time that it was useless to ask questions along certain lines. Parr seemed to take a keen delight in mystifying me, and I was obliged to content myself with the crumbs of information which he dropped from time to time. In spite of his secretiveness in the matter of details of the chase, I trusted that my friend would let me be in at the death.

Our gray-eyed friend announced us. We found Paillard in very bad humor, quite naturally. Parr soon succeeded in getting him into a better frame of mind, however, and the Spaniard fairly beamed upon him after he produced some signed application blanks. Parr then went on to say that he had several "live ones" on the hook, and that he proposed to close deals for substantial blocks of the copper stock within a few days.

After promising to consummate the deals as quickly as possible, Parr and I were on the point of leaving the inner office, when the detective turned to a window commanding a view of the harbor.

"It's a beautiful view you have here, Mr. Paillard," he commented. "By the way," he went on, simultaneously feeling in his side-pocket, "I have here one of the most powerful little glasses in the world. It's an achromatic by Chevalier of Paris."

Producing an aluminum case, Parr drew a pair of pocket binoculars from it and extended them to Paillard.

"See what you can make out of that steamship's flag," he went on, "the one just off Bedloe's Island."

"Either French or Italian," pronounced Paillard after he had focused the glasses

to his satisfaction. "It's just a little too thick to distinguish green from blue; but the glasses are really wonderful."

"Picked 'em up in a second-hand store yesterday," observed Parr as he returned the binoculars to their case.

With that remark he turned and left the offices of the company; and I followed him, after exchanging smiles with the new stenographer.

IV



I WAS not greatly surprised one morning while taking a canter around the Park with Parr when he asked me to call at the headquarters of The International Bureau at noon without fail.

Upon my arrival he introduced me to two strangers who were to pose as buyers of shares in the Montano Copper Mining and Milling Company. I surmised at once that something important was in the wind, but as Parr refrained from taking me into his confidence I asked no questions. As I looked at the stalwart forms of the men introduced to me as "Messrs. Cassidy and Cronin," something told me that the puckering rope of the great net was at work; that a dramatic climax of some kind was close at hand.

"Shake hands with Mr. Cassidy and Mr. Cronin," began Parr after we had all been ushered into the private office of the promoter.

Paillard shook hands with his prospective customers. He then busied himself finding seats for us, and passed around the cigars.

"We dropped in to see you about a supply of stock," went on Parr after the cigars were glowing. "But first," he added, "Mr. Cassidy has something to say that'll interest us all."

"It's only a little story that I want to tell," began Cassidy, a heavily built man with sharp eyes and a sunburnt face.

Cronin, the larger of the two strangers, arose from his chair at this juncture and took up his station at the window nearest Paillard. Listlessly he pulled away at his cigar, seemingly more interested in a puffing tugboat rounding the Battery than in his companion's story.

"As I was saying—it's only a short story," went on Cassidy. "The story is mostly about Mexico, and concerns the superintendent of the *Compañía Minera* of

Sonora—he disappeared twelve years ago.”

Paillard plucked nervously at his beard and looked quickly at each of us in turn. The story-teller paused to clear his throat.

“His name was José Delgado;” he resumed in ringing tones, looking Paillard full between the eyes. “He’s——”

“There’s no revolver in that drawer,” broke in Parr harshly as the promoter’s hand slid along the edge of his desk. “Your stenographer removed it this morning before you came to business.”

For one moment the Spaniard remained motionless, his right hand resting upon the edge of the desk; then, with an inarticulate roar he sprang to his feet and reached toward one of his vest-pockets. A small flat object appeared in his hand, but before he could level it at Parr, who sat between him and the door, Cronin struck him an overhanded blow with a pocket-billy. A wicked-looking derringer clattered to the floor near my feet, and with a howl of pain the promoter nursed his wrist and gave up the fight.

“Better frisk him, John,” suggested Cassidy. “He’s a bad actor—might be one of these ‘two-gun’ men.”

Cowed by Cassidy’s automatic pointed at the pit of his stomach, Paillard raised his hands. Skilfully running his hands over the Spaniard’s person, Cronin shook his head and then snapped a pair of patent handcuffs around the wrists of his prisoner.

“Sit down now and listen to the rest of the story,” Cronin ordered the trembling promoter; “I want to hear it all myself.”

 “AS I was saying, this superintendent’s name was José Delgado,” Cassidy resumed after pocketing his revolver. “He was working for the *Compañía Minera*, and robbing it at the same time. A crooked assayer and false smelter returns, but we’ll let that part of it go. He had quite a stake put away in a safe place. He might have made his pile, but he got tripped up by a woman.

“Her name was Santa Pérez y Sanchez, a pretty little Mexican girl about nineteen years old. She’d just been married to one of the young level bosses at the mine when Delgado began to pester the life out of her. He ordered her husband on the night-shift and got into the habit of prowling around the house. The girl told her husband about it. One evening when he was supposed to be at work, Gallo, the husband, sneaked back

to his house and lay low. The boss came around soon afterward and began to chin to the girl. The super came out. Gallo felt for his knife. There was a mix up. Delgado fired a number of shots. The girl came running out of the house. Gallo got plugged in the shoulder, and the poor girl got it through one of her lungs.

“The super knew that everything was up with him. He got to the company corral and saddled up one of the fastest *pintos* in Mexico. He broke through a mob of peons and headed for the international line. The telegraph beat the horse, though, and the *rurales* nailed him at a little place called Magdalena. He put up a fight and managed to croak one of the *rurales*.

“They jailed him in Hermosillo, and after a trial for the two murders he was sentenced to death. In some way which hasn’t been made clear he managed to get hold of a piece of money. He fixed one of the prison guards with some of the money, and arranged for a string of horses with the rest of it. One dark night he made his famous get-away to Guaymas, and then the Mexican Government lost track of him.

“Although there’s a standing reward of five thousand Mexican dollars for the delivery of any person who kills a *rurale*, nobody has ever claimed it so far on account of Delgado. According to all accounts Delgado knocked about all over the world for several years, and then settled down here in New York. He’s made quite a bit of money for himself, but he’ll never live to spend it. The funds of his fake mining company have been located and attached. He can thank a woman for it. If he hadn’t trimmed a certain English widow for almost her last penny he might have been safe to-day.

“She had spirit. She wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer. She got our detective friend here to work on her case. By brain work—to say nothing about a pair of freshly lacquered field-glasses which got his fingerprints—he proved that Falerno Paillard and José Delgado were one and the same person!”

 PAILLARD was both livid and speechless. His breath came and went in gasps. His hands shook so that the chain between the handcuffs actually rattled upon the polished surface of the desk.

“And now for a few introductions,” the

story-teller continued. "José Delgado, alias 'Falerno Paillard,' that gentleman across the desk from you is Mr. Godfrey Parr of The International Bureau of Investigation. The party side of him is his friend, Mr. Bruce Clarke. The man that cracked you over the wrist is John Cronin of the Central Office, an old side partner of mine. John's got a *capias* for you in his pocket that you'll be held on; and then I'm going to take you down to Mexico. As for myself—my name is Frank Cassidy, once of the New York detective force. I'm one of the five *Americanos* employed by the Mexican Government in their new Secret Service Bureau; and if John Cronin can get off for a couple of weeks I'll let him help me take you down. And I'll split the reward with him too, for old times' sake."

The speaker paused to light a fresh cigar.

"I want to introduce you to a lady," put in Parr. He beckoned to the young woman in the outer room. Horrified at what she had overheard, the gray-eyed woman entered the room with halting steps.

"This is Mrs. Adelaide Saxon, formerly of Reigate, Surrey. I believe you once had some correspondence with her," Parr concluded, turning to the prisoner.

"And she's not going to lose her money after all," asserted Cassidy. "I didn't quite finish the story. There's more than one reward at stake. It happens this way: Santa Pérez, the Mexican girl, died; but her husband, Gallo, lived. He got sick of working underground, and went in for bull-fighting. He won his way to the top—chiefly on account of his iron nerve. Today he's said to be one of the highest priced *matadors* in the world. He's known far and wide as '*El Gallo*,' and he's made barrels of money. He's covered himself with gore and glory in South America, and he made a big hit in Spain. He's the idol of the Mexican people, and he gets two thousand '*dobe*' dollars every Sunday in the year."

"He's got one peculiarity. During a *corrida*, when he's not engaged with the bull, he walks around and around the ring inside the barrier, looking up at the spectators as if in search of some particular person. I happen to know who he's looking for. He hopes one day to look into the eyes of the man who killed his Santa."

The prisoner buried his face in his hands.

"Now—as for the other reward," Cassidy

went on, "there's ten thousand dollars in gold deposited in the *Banco Londres y Mexicano* in the City of Mexico in the name of Gallo. That sum of money is for the person who takes José Delgado, dead or alive. And what's more, El Gallo has stated publicly on more than one occasion that he'll duplicate that reward and pay it over to the person or persons who take Delgado into the Republic of Mexico *alive*! At Mr. Parr's request—he started the ball rolling—we've all agreed to waive all claim to the first reward in favor of the English lady; but Cronin and I are going in strong for the duplicate reward."

Verily, the net had drawn close with a vengeance.



"IT WAS a case of hitting three birds with one stone," I observed a few weeks later as I sat in Parr's office. "You not only put a stop to a contemptible swindling scheme, but you also brought a murderer to justice and saved a woman's money."

"Have you seen the morning papers?" asked the man-hunter, a little irrelevantly as I thought.

When I confessed that I had but briefly skimmed over the headlines, he handed me a clipping from a morning paper. It read as follows:

MEXICAN RETRIBUTION

LAREDO, Texas, Sept. 22.—As the I. & G. N. train for the south pulled across the river into the Nuevo Laredo station on the Mexican side about dusk last evening a bull-fighter in full costume, direct from the Nuevo Laredo bull-ring, sprang aboard. He reached the smoking-compartment of the second Pullman coach and was about to pass on when he saw a prisoner in charge of two American detectives.

Before either of the detectives or any of the passengers could interfere, the bull-fighter addressed the prisoner in Spanish and then spitted him with his straight sword—the same weapon used in the usual Sunday *corrida* barely a half-hour before. Withdrawing the sword he pierced the unfortunate prisoner again and again until overpowered and disarmed.

It is rumored that the bull-fighter is none other than the famous El Gallo; but as he is being held strictly *incommunicado* and the detectives have continued on to the Mexican capital, little or no authoritative information can be obtained. It is said that the deceased prisoner was a fugitive from justice and that many years before he was responsible for the death of the bull-fighter's wife.

I have often wondered who notified El Gallo that his wife's murderer was aboard

that particular train. At times, when I look into Parr's kindly face, I feel that he could not have been the informant. At other times, when I sit in the headquarters of his man-hunting organization and watch that hard expression sweep over his face, I am not so positive.

I have never asked him.

In time, I learned that El Gallo was liberated. I have never seen him in the ring, as I am not an admirer of bull-fighters, but I have seen the spot where his wife lies bur-

ied. An angel, carved from the whitest marble by one of the world's greatest sculptors marks the plot. Railings of solid silver surround a white tomb, guarded day and night by El Gallo's retainers.

As for Adelaide Saxon, it seems that she likes America so well that she intends to remain here, and make it her permanent home. She has sent over for her little girl, and after a whole lot of persuasion on my part, has agreed to let me pay for the little one's music lessons.



NOT MENTIONED in DESPATCHES

A Tale of South Africa in 1901

by W. TOWNSEND

THE district, according to official report, was pacified and the inhabitants friendly, wherefore it followed that the town was usually more or less in a state of siege and had to be relieved periodically. The garrison consisted of four weak companies of a Line Regiment, one company of Mounted Infantry, a fifteen-pounder and a pom-pom.

The town itself was small, but straggled and sprawled haphazard into the yellow-

brown veldt, far away from the railway, exposed and desolate. Each whitewashed, tin-roofed house was separated from its neighbors by rough stone walls and ditches, gardens, mealie-patches, blue gum-trees, poplars and sycamores. The streets were broad cart-tracks, either deep in thick dust or impassable through mud. On the eastern side, overlooked by the church, was a large market-place in which the British were encamped behind broad, high earthworks

protected by intricate wire entanglements.

One wet night a force of Boers considerably over a thousand strong, hastily gathered together from the remnants of several shattered commandoes, surrounded the town. Their plans were simple and might have succeeded but for various unforeseen catastrophes. Under cover of the rain detached parties crawled between the advanced pickets and made for the inner trenches undiscovered, until a sentry, hearing footsteps, fired. The Boers were beaten back, but held their ground stubbornly in the buildings of the town, losing heavily before they were finally dislodged.

So much for a *barè* outline of the engagement. This narrative, however, deals only with the defense of a small house by Stenson—a subaltern—a sergeant, a corporal, and six privates.

Now, to do Stenson justice it was no wish of his that they ever went near the house. Private Mullins took matters into his own hands, and Stenson, though nominally in command, was obliged to submit.

Private Mullins, a thick, stocky, bull-necked man with a black mustache and little pig's eyes set close together, had many failings in spite of a genial smile. He drank deeply, he garnished his speech with strange and unnecessary oaths, he lied shamelessly for the mere pleasure of lying, he grumbled perpetually. In fact, Private Mullins was by no means all that a British soldier should be.

Properly speaking, the affair of the house began in an outlying *sangar* where a corporal and six wretched privates shivered and waited impatiently for morning. They were hungry and cold; they were drenched to the skin, their torn, patched overcoats were no protection against the downpour, and the water trickled through their puttees over the tops of their sodden boots.



OUT of the darkness behind them there came of a sudden the sharp splutter of musketry. The men stood up stiffly and peered into the rain, gripping their rifles with numbed fingers.

Stenson and a sergeant, visiting the outposts, ran up hurriedly, unchallenged.

"They're attacking on the other side," said Stenson.

"Pr'aps," said the corporal guardedly, "it's only a false alarm, sir. I don't think——"

Even as he spoke the enemy poured in a fierce volley from their front and he toppled over with a yelp.

"Old Thomas, 'e's kicked," remarked Private Mullins, sliding about in a vain endeavor to keep his footing.

"Now then," said Stenson, "at three—no—hold hard a bit! Five, four hundred——"

"It don't matter any'ow," said a hoarse voice. "We can't see our sights, let alone the Bogers."

The bullets whistled over the *sangar* and the picket replied unsteadily, aiming at the bright flashes.

"My Gawd!" said Private Mullins, his teeth clicking, "if they're all round us, why——"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Stenson, "whoever you are. I believe—I believe——" He squinted earnestly through his hands. "I can't quite——"

On their left they heard savage yells and cheers.

"Ar've 'ad enough o' this muckin' about," said Private Mullins. "What's the good o' stoppin' 'ere?"

"They're rushin' the next *schanz*, that's what they are. Listen!"

"Ah!" said Private Mullins, "an' they'll be on us in a jiffy. Ar'm off back. Come on, you chaps!"

He scrambled away clumsily.

"What the blazes are you doing?" shouted Stenson. "Stop where you are—you, Wilson, Clarke, Matthews!"

But the six privates—seasoned war-worn veterans—bolted for safety in unreasoning panic, too weary, too dispirited to care what happened afterward.

"Curse them!" said Stenson. "They're the rottenest lot of cowards in the Battalion."

"It's not much use our staying, sir," muttered the sergeant.

Stenson did not hesitate.

"Hurry, then," he said, "hurry!"

They overtook the fugitives, plodding along lamely, their coat skirts flapping about their knees, their feet squelching in the slush at every stride.

"You devils!" panted Stenson. "You——"

A loud crackle of rifle-fire ahead brought them to a halt, clustered together at a low broken-down wall of loose stones.

"The Bogers 'ave got in between us an'—Let's get back to the *schanz*!"

Stenson, irresolute, turned his head. The *rap-rap-rap-rap-rap* and the spurts of flame answered him.

"Gawd! they're comin' after us!" roared Private Mullins. "Ere, in 'ere, quick!"

They clambered over the wall and made for a white house, looming gray against the dark mass of trees.

Stenson charged on to the stoop, smashing a trellis-work, and banged at the door with his fists.

"Open at once!"

Private Mullins, more practical, rammed his butt through a window and they climbed in with the bullets chipping off the white-wash in big flakes.

It was in this unheroic manner that Stenson seized the house, just as the night was changing to a dreary dawn.

"Ah!" growled private Mullins, "ar've cut me knee on ther blighted glass."

"'Ome at last. It's — dark in 'ere, eh? But there's no rain an'—"

"Shut up, you, Clarke!" Stenson was furious. "We'll have to search, yes—wait a bit, though—lie down there, can't you! Lie down, you fools! Put something—no, let them have it, a couple of you—be careful!"

The sergeant and another man knelt down and fired. Stenson, bent double, felt his way around the table. A door opened and he stopped, gripping his Mauser pistol tightly.

"Wie dar?" said a feeble voice.

A pale-faced woman looked into the room, shading a flickering candle with her hand.

"Get down!" said Stenson. "Do you want to be shot?"

The candle-stick clattered to the floor, and a man laughed.

"Oh, dear God!" moaned the woman.

"They've gone, sir," said the sergeant from the window. "We'd best—"

Stenson held the woman by the wrist.

"Are you alone?" he asked. "Is there any one else here? You understand English, eh?"

"Dear Lord! You can not remain, you can not, I say!"

"Oh, indeed!" drawled one of the soldiers. "Anything else, missus, while you're at it?"

"Er—Sergeant Johnson," said Stenson, "you and er—three others come with me. The rest——" He started through the door.

The woman burst into tears.

"My man is—my man is——"

In the back of the house something fell noisily. Stenson pushed her to one side against the wall.

"My God! sergeant, they've followed us!"



THEY rushed through the next room, past a high double bed, and broke open a door leading to the kitchen. A rifle cracked, the bullet grazed Stenson's ear and he tumbled forward at full-length, the pistol jerked from his hand. A Boer dropped on top of him, knocking the wind out of his body. For some moments he lay half-stunned, wedged in among many legs, unable to stir, listening to the fierce howls of rage and agony.

At last the press gave and he shoved the dead man off and staggered to his feet, sick and dizzy, covered with blood.

Private Mullins exulted savagely.

"Ho! ho! ho! Ar got him all right, Ar did, just as 'e were gettin' out o' ther winder!"

"Who are those?" asked Stenson, pointing to three limp figures.

"Two on 'em is theirs, an' that's Wilson," answered the sergeant. "I 'ope you're not 'urt, sir?"

"No, 'cept that some idiot kept treadin' on me, and my head aches. Now then, don't waste any time, search the — house and stick furniture and things against the windows. You, Mullins, stop where you are."

He went back into the room where the woman sat huddled by the bed, and tore down the blinds.

"We'll need all the mattresses you've got. I'm sorry. This is a corner room and——" he stared out of the side window—"we'll have to be careful here."

"Sir," said the sergeant abruptly, "there's a—a man asleep in the bed!"

"Great Scott!" Stenson crossed over and shook the sleeper by the arm. "Hi! wake up! wake up, you!"

The woman clutched at him frantically, her voice rising to a shrill scream.

"He is my man, I tell you, my man! He is dead since yesterday, he is dead; I am alone and he is dead!"

Stenson stepped back.

"My God! I'm——"

"There's one big mattress on this 'ere, an' two small ones," said the sergeant stolid-

ly. "We'd better take 'em, sir, before they starts shootin' again."

Stenson nodded.

"We must have the mattresses, I'm afraid—and, look here, it's no good——"

The woman shrieked and put her arms around the dead man.

"You shall not! You shall not!"

"Oh, ——!" said Stenson, uncomfortably, hauling her off by the wrists.

She struggled to free herself as the sergeant and a private lifted her husband very gently from the bed on to the floor. Then she collapsed by his side.

Stenson, feeling very tired and sick at heart, wandered about restlessly. The house was L-shaped and had only four rooms: the big bedroom, the parlor by which they had entered, a room beyond, empty save for a few boxes, and the kitchen at the back. Each of the rooms was littered with the fragments of crockery and splinters of wood; a door hung by one hinge; star-shaped patches dotted the walls, and plaster was strewn everywhere. The thick flock mattresses had been doubled up and placed at the windows on top of heavy furniture.



IN THE kitchen the dead men were lying as they had fallen amid broken plates and dishes, sprawling ungracefully with twisted limbs.

Private Mullins, unconcerned by any horrors, leaned against the wall between the garden-door and the range, chewing tobacco; his face was covered with black stubble, smeared with dirt, his slouch hat drooped limply about his ears, his dark gray overcoat was bunched awkwardly at the waist, his legs were shapeless, cased in thick mud.

"Cawn't see much, sir," he said with easy familiarity. "Dunno' what good Ar'm supposed to be."

"You'll stay here all the same," retorted Stenson, flaring up.

"Ar never said Ar wouldn't." He spat deliberately.

"Well, pull yourself together then! If it hadn't been for you, we'd not be here."

"We'd 'ave bin dead, that's why," said Private Mullins.

Stenson gazed out over the rough barricade into a small, overgrown garden, wherein were some out-houses, backed by a wall and a high screen of trees and tangled bushes.

The irregular *crick-crock, crick-crock* of rifles merged into a long-sustained rattle.

"There's a big fight t'other side o' ther dorp," remarked Private Mullins. "Ther Bogers ain't goin' ter worry us."

Stenson picked up Wilson's rifle and the belt, with its bayonet, pouches and braces attached thereto; then he strolled into the bedroom.

"We're safe enough, now, sir," said the sergeant, a sharp-faced little man. "That's a gun in action and—d'jer hear the pom-pom?"

"It's clearing up," said Stenson. "I'll be glad to get out of this hole."

He glanced across at the woman who crouched in a corner with her husband's head on her lap. She was quite young, but her cheeks were sunken and her eyes red-rimmed.

"She oughtn't to be in here, it's the angle and——"

"I've told her so 'undreds of times, sir, but she 'asn't paid no 'eed."

"*Hullo-o!*" said the private at the side window.

"See anything, Matthews?"

"Yes, sir, that is——"

The sergeant gave an excited exclamation.

"Ah! Look there, sir! That'll be three hundred."

He cuddled his rifle, his eyes shining.

A number of Boers raced for shelter, half-hidden by the dips in the ground, and opened fire. The bullets smacked against the brick walls or clanged through the corrugated iron roof.

Stenson loaded his rifle behind the chest of drawers, on which was rolled a mattress, kept in its place by a box.

"I wonder what they're playing at, dodging about like that!"

A dark figure showed on a slight rise, running quickly. The sergeant pulled his trigger.

"Ah—got him!" He smiled happily. "They're skippin', that's it, sir. I remember once when I was at home, sir, rabbitin'——"

He paused; then he threw away his rifle and slid over, clawing at the air.

Farther off more Boers came into view, some on foot, some on horseback; Stenson emptied his magazine rapidly.

The woman rocked backward and forward, her hands over her face.

After a few random shots the attack ceased altogether.

"They've got away," said Stenson. "Curse!"

He bent over the sergeant.

"Is 'e dead, sir?" asked Matthews, crossing from his window.

"Yes, that leaves six." He took off his wet overcoat and stretched himself, yawning. "Heigho! it'll be warm later on."

Private Clarke, a tall man covered from head to foot with white dust, looked in through the door.

"They've gone, ain't they, sir?"

"Yes."

"Ah! then they won't trouble us again." He turned to the woman. "Beg pardon, missus, but is there anything to eat in the 'ouse?"

She made no reply.

"Let her be," said Stenson. "It's hopeless."

He paced to and fro uneasily, listening to the scraps of conversation in the next room.

"I think I got two on 'em, just by the ditch yonder."

"You're a liar, Weston. Any'ow, if yer did, yer didn't aim at 'em, old son."

"That Dutchman in there, 'e's another oath-breaker, eh? Poor blighter, fancy 'im bein' dead! Wonder 'ow long 'e was married. P'r'aps 'e might 'ave been fightin' against us."

"Lend us a pull-through, will yer?"

 IN THE kitchen Private Mullins was cutting up some tobacco in his palm, from time to time gazing carelessly out of the window. He turned his head as Stenson walked in.

"Any one been on your side?"

The growl of musketry continued at the other end of the town.

"No, sir," said Private Mullins. "It's all over now, eh?"

The subaltern eyed him with extreme disfavor:

"Maybe."

Private Mullins glanced once more out of the window. Then he raised his rifle with a yell.

"Hi! Look at 'em! Look at 'em!" He fired and a volley crashed back. "Ther Burghers are in the trees, there." He fired again. "We'll give 'em —, we'll give 'em —!"

Stenson rushed into the bedroom for his rifle.

"Clarke," he shouted, "you; into the kitchen, quick! And take a mattress along with you! Can you see them from there?"

Matthews was shooting from the side window.

"Just caught sight of 'm, sir—just. In the bushes an' be'ind the wall."

Stenson went to the parlor door.

"You, Weston, and you, er—Pritchard, come here. One of you keep with Matthews, the other stick at the front window—don't move from it!" He made for the kitchen, but stopped once more. "Hadn't you better go into the far room?" he said to the woman.

She stared at him blankly and he passed on, twisting the sling around his left arm.

Mullins and Clarke had heaped the mattress on top of the barricade and were firing at the crackle and splutter in the bushes.

"They're safe be'ind that there wall," said Mullins. "Blarst 'em!"

Clarke clutched at his collar.

"Ow! I'm—I'm——"

He coughed and sat down, groaning. Stenson lifted him to one side by the dresser.

"Gawd!" said Private Mullins, wiping his wet forehead, "Ar'm sweating like a pig." He was aiming methodically as though at the butts, talking the while in a loud tone. "Ar wish we could see some of 'em, but no — fear, no—ah!—fear, not like us, them Burghers."

He filled his magazine with clumsy fingers. "They cawn't cop us, though!" His voice mingled with the *pang-pang-pang* of their Lee-Enfields and the deafening clanging of the bullets in the roof. "Ar wonder what's 'appened to ther fellers in ther camp. Joe Bridgman 'e ses ter me, ses 'e—— Ah! 'Ope to Gawd I 'it 'im; saw 'is 'at!" He unbuckled his belt and shuffled out of his overcoat and jacket. His gray shirt hung in rags about his shoulders. "Ah! that's easier; Ar'll teach 'em."

His coarse face, red under the mask of filth, was set in the savage, triumphant grin of the fighter dealing punishment.

"Hi, Mat! Ol' Clarke's wounded!" he bellowed. "'Ow're you gettin' on?"

"Aw' right, prime!"

Private Mullins chuckled.

"Ho! ho! 'Oo ses I can't shoot! 'Oo ses I ain't—We'll teach the Bogers, ther—Gawd!"

He half stood up, but sank on to his knees again, his mouth open stupidly.

There was a *ss-swhizzh* overhead and a deafening crash the other side of the house.

"My God!" said Stenson. "They've—they've turned a gun on to us!"

"But, look 'ere," stammered Mullins, "what Ar want ter know is, why ther—— are they botherin' about *us*? Isn't there ——" He broke off, licking his dry lips. "They've took ther camp, ther Bogers; that's what they've done! ——! Else they couldn't be where they is."

Stenson laughed bitterly; a thin, dry-throated cackle.

Again there came the whistling, wailing shriek and the nerve-shattering, ear-splitting crash of the exploding shell, followed immediately by the thunder of falling masonry.

The kitchen was untouched save for a shower of bricks wrenched from the mortar. The rifles from the trees and wall roared on with unabated force.

Dazed for the moment, quivering and shaking from the shock, Stenson did not move. Then he staggered to his feet and looked through the broken door into a dense cloud of dust. The wall on the left had collapsed.

"Matthews!" he called anxiously.

"I'm aw' right," said Matthews.

"And the others?" asked Stenson.

A figure stumbled toward them.

"House gone, Ar'm 'arf blinded, the woman she's gone, so's Weston, an'—we can't do nothing, we can't!"

"You stow that, Pritchard, you stick it!" yelled Private Mullins. "And Ar'm near out of ammunition an'—why, —— it! 'oo are you to talk? Go back an' fight!" He groped on the floor for more cartridges.



STENSON, only half conscious of what he was doing, took his place at the table once more.

"Another o' them things," said Private Mullins, "an' we won't bother about ammunition or anything else."

He fired at the trees, working the bolt swiftly, scarcely taking the butt from his shoulder.

"It's all up." Matthews lurched in over the pile of débris. "Pritchard's killed, an'—an' they're all round now." He spoke in a quavering voice. "An' the floor's burnin'. It's 'opeless!"

Stenson choked miserably.

"We've—we've done our best and——"

"Not a bit of it!" said Mullins. "Ar'm just beginnin' to enjoy myself. The camp may 'ave gone to pot, but we 'aven't. 'Ere, more cartridges, some one! There's all Clarke's yet. Stir yourself, Mat! Load, ar tell yer! Ready—d'jer 'ear?"

Matthews started to his feet.

"Good Gawd above us! Why they're——"

Before he could finish he was shot through the head.

"Leave 'im where 'e is!" said Mullins.

"Leave 'im!"

Stenson let the rifle slip from his hands:

"It's all up; it's all up, we can't do anything."

"Ho! cawn't we, by Gawd! Cawn't we! Ar can see 'em again, they're on us! Ho! ther Burghers 'ave got us, but, by Gawd! they'll pay for it!"

Stenson picked up his rifle, shivering. Mullins was shouting as he fired across the mattress.

"Fix bayonets! Fix—Hi! there's still spoons left for this tea-party!"

The roll of musketry died away to a strange stillness.

Butts battered at the garden-door and it cracked from top to bottom.

"Surrender, —— you! Surrender!"

"Ho! ther Burghers are wearing khaki, are they!" shrieked Mullins. He lunged at the gap. "We'll teach 'em, by Gawd!"

Stenson, gray-faced, stood with his back to the dresser, waiting grimly for the end, his bayonet ready.

A scurry of yells came from the front of the house.

"Hands up!" roared a voice. "Hands up!"

"By Gawd!" said Private Mullins in a bewildered way, as though suddenly sobered. "By Gawd! it's—*it's our own chaps!*"

A stout officer followed by some of his men climbed in from the wrecked bedroom through the smoke.

"Hands up! Hands up!"

Stenson gave a deep sob and tottered forward; his rifle fell to the floor.

Private Mullins broke into a fit of wild laughter.

"Good Lord!" gasped the stout officer. "We never—we never knew—knew you fellows were in the house!"

"You always were a —— fool!" said Stenson hoarsely.

The Message



by
**PLANTER
CHASE**

SYNOPSIS.—Graham Hawtry, sent out by his paper to run down a rumor of the shooting of a detective, meets Doris Kingslee in a passageway through a warehouse on the river-front. Chancing to witness the abduction of a girl, she had followed, seen the murder of the detective by the abductors, and in terror had fled. In trying to escape together, Hawtry and Doris fall into the hands of the gang and are placed under guard in a room in the warehouse.

CHAPTER X

THE MASTER SPIRIT

UOW those dirty eyes live in my memory. You know the sort—almost black, with the edges of the retina seeming to blend into the white, as if the color had run. They looked us over, with special attention to me, it appeared; and presently I understood that there was more than mere triumph in the fellow's expression toward me. There was a malevolence that seemed purely gratuitous, at first. I felt that the man hated me with the sort of hatred that would make killing me but a mild expression of it.

I was not long in finding the secret of it, however. When next he spoke, he gave me the key at once.

"Strong man!" he sneered contemptuously at me. Then, as if this intended taunt were like a gust to fan some smoldering passion in him, he suddenly swung his hand and slapped me across the mouth, with an oath. "I'll get even with you, you pig of a

detective!" he snarled, shaking his fist.

It would have been insanity to strike back. I felt the very skin on my face draw with the change of color in it, but I stood still.

"Oh," said I, "you are the chap I knocked into the river, I take it."

"I'm the chap that won't forget it!" he answered. "I never forget!"

He had a peculiar accent of voice that is inimitable in print, and so I do not attempt to reproduce it. It would make hard reading at best. Sometimes his words were not entirely articulate, and were drawn out in a strange lingering drawl that was not the sort of thing to rob them of suggestiveness. He clung to them with a sort of tenacity that suggested the tenacity of that memory of which he boasted.

I felt poor little Miss Kingslee shiver with the fright of it. For that reason I put on a bolder front than I might otherwise have done—a sort of bravado I did not wholly feel. It takes the presence of a girl one is growing to regard to make a man a braggart.

"The game isn't played out yet, Mr. Boaster," I answered.

"It is not," he said grinning. "I have yet to stick the knife in you!"

He made a horrid suggestive movement with his free hand. I sneered openly at him. It had the effect of hardening me a little, too. If I had such cruelty as this to deal with, I might as well meet it with bravado as with the white feather. Submission never yet won leniency from the cruel.

He laughed. But he stopped bantering suddenly, and his black brows drew together. He pulled two large bandanna handkerchiefs out of his pocket. One of them he promptly reached out to me.

"Take it," he said.

I took it.

"Put it around the eyes," he added, pointing to the girl, and I understood that I was to blindfold her.

I shrank from the task, but there was nothing for it but to obey. I did it carefully, and while I stood beside her she clung to my coat with a show of fear that I had not seen in her before. In that moment I grew into a far more dangerous sort of man to have as prisoner unbound than I had been at any time before I reached the point of absolute devotion of life and very heart's blood to my lady's cause.

My hands, busy with the handkerchief, touched her hair. It was enough to set a flame of madness alight in me at the notion that there might be other hands upon her in ruthless cruelty.

When my task was done, the fellow himself bound my hands behind me. Then he blindfolded me also. After that he backed me against a chair and made me sit, and almost immediately he clapped over my mouth some strange-smelling sticky thing like a plaster, that stuck to my lips so closely that I could not open them. He left my nose free, so the intent was not to smother me, merely to provide against my shouting.



I SAT still and heard him talk to Doris Kingslee, and I judged by the sounds that he had provided for the sealing of her lips in manner like the one used with me. Then he made me stand up, and he tied the wrists of the two of us together with a cord extending from my hands to hers. I heard him muttering to himself as he worked, and he was anything but gentle with me at least. When he had finished,

he suddenly slapped me again in the face, with a slap that resounded in the room.

I was helpless to see just where he stood, but my blood boiled over. How I regretted that I had not tried to kill him when I stood unbound! I could not resist the impulse to kick at him, and I did with all my force. Queerly enough, the kick landed. He yowled like an animal. But the only thing it got me was a return kick that struck me on the left shin.

It hurt me so that I doubled over, and next instant his brutal foot came up into my face with a blinding upward blow that nearly felled me over backward. If it had not been partly caught upon my shoulder, I believe it would have broken my nose.

He laughed with a hissing chuckle through his teeth. Then he came close to me and took hold of one of my hands behind me. Next moment I felt the edge of a knife drawn slowly across the ball of my thumb.

"Feel it?" he asked, as the blade cut through the skin.

I winced. Again he laughed.

"Well, you get that next time, right there!" he promised, and jabbed me suddenly in the ribs with a prodding finger.

I was pretty well battered up now, and felt that it was only the part of wisdom to refrain from further demonstration. I stood still and cursed myself for a fool of all sorts, for ever letting myself be bound again. As if the fellow read my thoughts, he presently made remark about our first escape from our bonds.

"Pretty slick, eh?" he said. "Got out of the cords. Won't find it so easy now, eh?"

And then, abruptly, I heard some movement besides his in the room, and another voice came sharply out of the new direction.

"How long you going to be, Brinn?"

The man who had been abusing me seemed instantly to recognize a master.

"All ready, Mister Cap," he said. "All ready."

His voice seemed to take on a sort of anxiety, and for the moment I was relieved that some power besides his was to have sway over us.

"Here," said the new voice, "put these on 'em."

There was a pause, then a rustling sound, and suddenly something like a garment of thick cloth was slipped over my head and drawn down about my body. Immediately afterward some sort of head-gear was put

on, and I felt the fingers of the newcomer fussing about my face with arrangement of the thing, whatever it was.

"There," he said presently, standing back away from me as if to survey his handiwork. "He makes a pretty good nun, doesn't he?"

I felt some loose stuff swing against my face and was conscious that a heavy veil was there. I was disguised as a sister of some sort of order! What a figure I must make! I am not a small man, though not specially a large one. I must look large indeed for a woman! But the gown seemed a peculiarly good disguise, after all.

In no other way I could readily think of was there so easy a cover to be provided for bound hands and eyes and sealed lips, if we were to be taken out in daylight. The instant surmise that this was what was about to happen came to me, and there was a certain relief in it, though there was little enough hope that I could do one thing for our permanent help, handicapped as I now was.

What happened during the next half-hour seems sometimes the most unbelievable part of all the strange experience, as I look back at it. Yet it is not so amazing, perhaps, either, that two helpless prisoners in the garb of nuns could be led out into the light of day and through crowded streets, rubbing shoulders with men and women by the hundred who could have rescued us, and passing under the eyes of officers of the law who were actually looking for us, no doubt.

It was a daring thing for the men who had us in charge to undertake, yet what could we do? There was the man, Brinn, with that keen-edged knife of his, at my very elbow from the moment we left the long warehouse stairs, whispering threats every ten steps or so. The most I could have done was to make a sudden lunge to one side or a forward run or drop to the street, and it was hard to think how little such a move might accomplish for my little companion, while it was getting me a vital stab.

The plaster on my lips was evidently a surgeon's plaster, of the sort that sticketh closer than a brother. It adhered to the skin so tightly that I could not drag them apart. I nearly pulled the skin from them, indeed, in trying to do the trick. I strained as secretly as I could at the bonds on my wrists, but it was quite as fruitless an effort.

I tried raising and lowering my brows in extravagant fashion, to displace the handkerchief that covered my eyes, but this was unsuccessful also, for the thing was knotted so tightly as to be fairly painful.

So I walked—just walked, like a peaceful, meditative sister of charity, through streets that I was sure I knew, across crossings where we were forced by the traffic to pause and wait our chance; over bridges that confused me, but which I knew extended across tracks, for the sulphur fumes of standing locomotives came up twice to my nostrils.

We walked for half an hour without a pause. Ours was not a rapid pace, but we must have covered a mile and a half, I judged. We seemed to turn few corners. One or two we rounded at the start, then we took a straight road out some long avenue, which grew quieter and more quiet as we progressed. And at last we turned abruptly from the pavement and I felt my feet upon earth and dried sod, and we began a long stumbling journey on what seemed to be a country road.

CHAPTER XI

NEW QUARTERS

IT WOULD be tiresome to describe the whole of the route. We walked till my own limbs were weary, certainly. I wondered how my little companion was getting on, and listened constantly for sign of what was happening to her. I knew she was with me, for the tug on the cord that bound her wrists and mine was continually recurrent. So I felt reasonably certain that she was keeping up, with the same sort of fortitude she had shown in everything else. Brave little woman! I found myself wondering at the strength of the feeling of tenderness that crept upon me as I walked there beside her.

Was it possible a man could love a girl under such circumstances? I felt strange stirrings of the heart toward her, in my pity and my admiration. But I knew nothing of her more than she had told me.

My thoughts ran upon this. Strange occupation, perhaps, for a man who has good reason to think he may be on the way to his death. But the thought of death—the threat of it—seems to lose its novelty when it has hung over one steadily for several weary hours. Perhaps bodily weariness

itself has something to do with the dulness that comes at such a time, when one's sensibilities seem to lose their power to feel the fear that is only natural.

We reached a stopping place at last, when discomfort at the physical situation itself was growing hard to bear. We passed through some very rough ground and arrived at pavement again much to my surprise, for I had supposed we were in the country. We were taken up steps and into a house of some sort, and then we climbed stairs again, only a single flight, and my limbs shook after the exhaustion that had already been upon me.

We received only the tersest of directions from our captors all this time, but when we arrived at what seemed a final destination at last, we were at once aware that the man who had talked to the fellow Brinn was in charge of us, and seemed inclined to treat us as human beings.

He gave prompt directions to take off our disguises. Then he removed our eye-bandages and the cords from our hands. I was stiff and lame as I had not been at any time before, and my eyes refused to see at first in the sudden return to daylight after the long blindness and the pressure of the tight handkerchief. But when I was told that I could myself remove the surgeon's plaster from my lips, I looked up with a sort of dumb gratitude at the man who was making us so much more nearly able to endure our captivity.

He was a peculiar-looking chap. He had a wide face, like the Slav type, with small eyes and low-growing hair over his forehead. But he was as dark as a Greek, and wore a tiny mustache that turned up at the points. He was muscularly built and well dressed, and evidently sufficiently prosperous in this his calling to afford some of the good living that puts sleekness upon men. He was sleek. He was catlike too, in a way, which seems an odd quality in so heavy a man. He was a sort of tiger-cat. He looked as if the claws of him were buried but just under the softness of his paws, as it were, though the paws were concealing them well.

There were two other men with the two we already knew. None of the gang seemed at all concerned that we should see their faces, and none of them seemed to have attempted the least disguise. They seemed sure enough of the outcome of this affair to be willing to face people who could swear

to their identity at a later time, if that later time ever brought opportunity. The two additional members of the quartet were stout fellows, one of them clearly an Italian, the other looking to me like an Englishman. They had little to say, and were rather curious about us.



DORIS KINGSLEE was worn out. She sank into a chair almost as soon as she was freed from her disguise. She dropped down as if she had fainted, and I took the chance of fresh offense to my enemies by going at once to her. But she opened her eyes and smiled up at me with indomitable courage.

I looked hastily about the room we were in. It was a settled, parlor-like place that had the appearance of the ordinary respectable flat of some family in moderate circumstances. It had some of the creature-comforts that looked amazingly good to a man who had been worn and battered as I had been, and that seemed to rob the sinister situation of some of its threat, though reason told me easily enough that we were in no better position than when I first woke on the floor of that bare upper warehouse-room.

Our new master smiled upon us with strange benignity.

"You are to make yourselves at home here," he said, with a curious politeness. He even bowed to Doris Kingslee, with that sort of elaborate gesture of courtesy that is characteristic of the Latin races. "You will be allowed to rest and recuperate," he added. "You have this whole flat to yourselves. Use it as you like. But do not try to escape or to give alarm. When you have rested I shall have more to say to you. If you will do something—what you can to aid me—I will be merciful. If not, then we shall see what is best to do with you. I can be kind. I can also be unkind!"

It was melodramatic, but it was said in a tone of gentleness that suggested purring. I looked again at him and saw the smile in the back of his eyes turn to a gleam that warned me I had some one other than a mere kicking, stabbing brute now to deal with. Here was a criminal of a high type of intelligence, at least. That he was just as bad as the other, the man Brinn, there was no doubt whatever. That he was far more clever, and that he was capable, therefore, of far more ingenious cruelty, I did not doubt.

I bowed my acknowledgments of what he had said, but I wanted to rest and think, if opportunity were indeed to be allowed for the purpose, before I made up my mind what to do. Perhaps there was still some chance for us. What sort of thing did he want us to do? I could not guess that it was anything we could do. There could be no possible partnership between him and us. But there might be chance for stratagem. There might be openings that even so clever a man as I knew him to be from the very look of him could not always provide against.

But, to my surprise, the man seemed to intend making good his word at once. He spoke to his men and started to retire, leaving the girl and me alone together. As he went, he turned and said over his shoulder:

"Brinn will remain in the house to guard you." He laid his hand on Brinn's arm. "This is he," he added and grinned at me. "There's a Chinese down-stairs who will send you up some breakfast. It will come at once. But they will let you alone so long as you are quiet. Good-by. I'll see you this evening."

He went out at last with Brinn and closed the door, like a friend leaving us after a pleasant call. I stepped across the room instantly and swept aside the curtains over the window toward the front. I could not believe in such freedom, and I was not disappointed in what I found. Disappointment in the conviction I entertained would have meant hope. I found no fresh reason for hope. I found windows boarded up from bottom to top, with heavy planks bolted in place inside the glass, with only ventilation-holes bored at intervals near the top. We were as effectually sealed into the place as if the windows did not exist.

CHAPTER XII

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

DORIS sat in the chair she had first occupied through several long minutes, her eyes closed and her head back against the top in utter exhaustion. I turned to look at her when I first discovered how completely shut in we were, but she did not heed me for the time. She did not seem able to hope, and I could not wonder.

But I could not rest till I knew what manner of place we were in. I went to the door

of the hall into which the departing men had gone, and tried it. It was solid oak and locked as I had fully expected it would be. I crossed, therefore, to another that was opposite and looked into a bedroom, small and neat. The electric lights were burning in both rooms—in all the apartment, I soon found; and not a ray of daylight, except faint little streams through ventilation-holes, came in to dispel the darkness. I found another room beyond the bedroom and then a bath. There was a little inside hallway that allowed free movement from room to room and back to a small kitchen in the rear. I made a hasty though earnest search. But everywhere there were closed-up windows and locked outside doors, not a sign of opening or of a tool for making one.

I washed my stained and bruised face and then went back and found my companion asleep in her chair. Her head had fallen forward and she was lost to her present miseries so completely that she did not stir when I lifted her into a better position. I stood above her and looked down at the sweet lines of her lovely countenance, and my heart thrilled over her. She was the sweetest little creature I had ever had the opportunity to know in any such thorough fashion as I now knew one side at least of her nature.

I took my opportunity to look into that sweet face, and I let the feeling I was permitting myself surge up till I felt startled at its strength. It was not a wise thing to do, for what did I know of her life and of its relations? What chance was there that such loveliness as this was unappreciated by other men? What chance was there that she was not already bound to another man?

A sudden thought came to me that made me wince. I looked at her hands. The right lay over the left in her lap, in attitude of rest. The ring-finger was covered. I had not even thought of it before, but now the fact that I could not see whether or not she wore the tall-tale rings gave me such a wrench of pain that I could hardly forbear the simple thing it would have been to look at the little covered fingers. But it seemed like profanation. It seemed unfair. And I would not.

I turned away from her, and to the window again. And then my own weariness drove me to a chair and I sank down and closed my eyes. It may have been an hour or it may have been two before I opened them again. When I did, I realized at once that a

third person had come into the room, and presently I recognized that some sort of food had arrived for us.

I had not thought of hunger, but I had not eaten since a hasty dinner the night before. Miss Kingslee had told me that she had dined at the railroad station. She had doubtless dined scantily under the weight of anxiety she had then felt, and she must be in real need of food now.

The Chinese cook had brought a tray for us. He was a rather more than ordinarily stupid-looking Chink, but he grinned at me in friendly fashion as he set the tray on the table in the middle of the room, and I determined at once to cultivate him.

"Breakfast, John?" I asked, and got up to go across to him.

He looked at me oddly, but made no response. I waited, while I surveyed the tray. It contained an amazingly good provision of food, two fine cuts of a sirloin steak, and baked potatoes, a vegetable or two, and steaming hot coffee in great cups twice the size of the ordinary coffee-cup. It was like a restaurant luncheon such as a hungry laborer might order, and I was suddenly as hungry as I have ever been in my life. I spoke again to the Chinese.

"John, this looks good to me," said I, and turned to look down into his face, for he was shorter than I.

He looked up, and then interest spread over his face as if he had just heard me. But next instant he had pointed first to his lips and then to his ears, and had shaken his head sadly. Unmistakably he intended to give me to understand that he was a deaf-mute. I believe I stared at him for a full five seconds before I took it in, however. I was stupid with the little nap I had had after so long a siege without wholesome sleep.

"Can't you talk?" I asked him, even then.

He shook his head again.

I pointed to the food and then to myself with my brows rising to question-marks. Immediately he pointed to the still sleeping girl and then to me and nodded. I found it possible to grin at the humor of that, and the silent little chap laughed all over his face at me as a result of my show of amusement. He busied himself, like the good servant he was, in laying the dishes ready for our use. Then he inspected the tray carefully, bowed with accession of ceremony that was positively funny again, and went smiling away.



I CROSSED to Miss Kingslee and put my hand gently on her arm. She started and moaned pitifully.

I spoke to her and took her hand. She shrank away from me.

"Who are you?" she whispered sharply, with the suffering of her terrors of the whole past night in her eyes.

"I am Hawtry," said I. "Don't you know me? You are quite safe, and there is some food here for you."

She sat up at once, and looked around. Then her eyes came back to me once more, and there was shyness in them that made them adorable.

"I've been asleep?" she asked.

"Yes. I hope it has refreshed you," I answered her, still holding her fingers in the tenderness I could not resist indulging toward her.

"It has," she announced, withdrawing her hand, but smiling up at me as if to counteract the apparent distrust of the instinctive act.

I turned at once to the table.

"We are confined in an apartment of some comfort, it seems," I told her. "We are still confined and under the same sort of threat we have so far endured. But they do not mean to let us die of starvation or other neglect or abuse just now, it seems."

"Where are the men?" she asked.

"They have gone, for the present at any rate. They have left us to housekeep together till to-night, when they will return to tell us why they are entertaining us. We have all the outfit for housekeeping, too," I added. "This is just the drawing-room. There is a bedroom, a bath and a kitchen down the hall, but there is a Chinese cook down-stairs somewhere whose mission in life seems to be to smile upon us and to feed us. For a minute, it isn't half as bad as it might be. Do you want to primp?"

She smiled at me as I looked around at her again.

"Yes," she said frankly, and her hands went up to her hair as if she were in her own home and the thought of her appearance were the most important one in the world. And when I found myself thinking the gesture pretty and liking her the better for it, I knew that my case was getting more severe. I thought of that ring-finger again, and looked to see it. But her fingers were buried in her straying tresses and I failed again to see.

I turned away and absently, thoughtlessly, picked up a book that lay on the stand at one side of the room. There were several more about, and a book-case comfortably filled with volumes in ordinary, cheap bindings in a corner. I heard her leave me, as I looked at the cover of the volume in mechanical inquiry as to what it might be. Next moment I was staring at it fascinated by a queer coincidence. It was bound in a color and form that had an odd reminiscent suggestiveness for my mind. I turned the back of it up to my gaze and read the title:

SCOTT

ANNE OF GEIERSTEIN

It was exactly the same edition of the same book I had been reading on the evening before when the alarm had come that brought me the most amazing, the most threatening experience of my life. It was with almost superstitious awe that I looked at it, that I opened its cover and ran my fingers over the pages. And before my mind rose the vision of that other book, the counterpart of this, lying face down in my typewriter desk at the office of my paper.

It was merest coincidence, of course, like thousands of other happenings about which we smile and which we forget every month in our lives, but to me it seemed to contain some hidden significance, and I could not disabuse my mind of the impression. When my companion came back from the inner room I turned to her with the book in my hand, having opened to the page on which I had been reading only the night before, and I held it out to her with a sort of boyish expectation that she was going to be immediately interested also.

But I had to pause to look at her instead. She had been out of the room but a moment, it seemed, yet she had made a transformation in her appearance. She looked as trim and neat to my eyes as if she had just come from her own boudoir at home. Her hair was smoothed in neat bands that allowed only the least of curling tendrils to escape upon her forehead. Her face was fresh, as if the little sleep she had had might have rested her more thoroughly than mine had rested me.

She had taken off the velvet coat which had grown wrinkled with the variety of its

experiences of the last twelve hours, and she was in a dark traveling-gown of silk. It was smooth and fine and extremely becoming to her dark, sweet face; and it was easy to see that she had been used to the things of wealth and refinement and to modish dress.

She laughed at me, a little nervously, again, as she looked at me and then at the book.

"What is it?" she asked, and came and took the volume from my hand.

"Oh," she said. "'Anne of Geierstein!' What does it mean? It isn't exactly a new discovery, is it?"

"I was reading it last night when I was sent on the assignment that brought me here," said I. "I was reading the page to which I have opened there. Isn't it queer that I should find that book, of all the books in the world, here on this table, the very first volume I chance to pick up to-day?"

She looked at the page.

"It is the account of the imprisonment of the hero, isn't it? I remember," she answered. "Does it seem like prophecy to you?"

"It might be so interpreted," I replied.

I took the book again, and we both turned to the waiting luncheon. I drew a chair to the table and offered her a place beside the cups.

"Will you have luncheon with me, Miss Kingslee?" I asked.

She smiled again, a little wanly, and my humor fell rather flat.

"I think you must need to eat," she said.

"And you?" I asked.

She sat down and I hastened to give her one of the big cups and to insist that she drink a part of the coffee at once. She complied, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the flush of her cheek take on a little deeper tinge as the still hot liquid warmed her. I drank also then and felt the comfort of it. And in another moment we were enjoying a really good steak and the steaming baked potatoes, as if there were nothing so needful as to put strength into ourselves.

CHAPTER XIII

PLANS GIVE HOPE

DORIS KINGSLEE was a wholesome, live girl—very much alive, as I had seen proved that night—and your really

live girl eats a wholesome meal. And for a little while we did not talk. It was when I saw her sit back from the table with a sudden smile of confusion over her devotion to the task in hand that I felt it fair to rush into the business of new planning for escape.

"That book!" said I. "Do you remember the story?"

"Very well," she answered. "I remember the incident on the page you were reading—the sending of the note by the hand of the traitor priest."

"Yes," said I excitedly. "And the prisoners wrote the vital word of the message in invisible ink, do you remember that? They wrote in ink that had to be heated to come out to sight."

She nodded a bit uncertainly.

"Yes," she said, "I do remember it now. Invisible ink!"

She looked at me oddly. Then she picked up the book which I had laid face downward beside her and looked again at the page.

"Are you thinking of sending a message in invisible ink?" she asked presently.

It sounded like a bit of ridicule, but I did not believe she was the kind who would indulge in such a pastime at such a moment.

"I am thinking that we may be able to reach an idea by some such means," I replied.

"By means of invisible ink? Do you know how to make invisible ink?"

"No," said I, not understanding the smile that came to her lips. "I do not, but it suggests the sort of craft that we might work out to beat these guards of ours after all, if they will give us time."

"Better than that," she answered me. "It suggests a method."

"How do you mean?"

"I will undertake to make invisible ink that will come out with heat, if you will devise the method of sending a message and getting your correspondent to heat it."

My brain took fire with the idea. I reached across the table and seized her hand.

"Doris Kingslee," I said, "you are as good a man as I am—better, I believe. I believe we have a chance, if they mean to be as slow with our case as they show symptoms of being now."

She did not take her hand away for a moment. She turned the palm up and

pressed my fingers with her own warmly.

"Good friend," she said, "would not I be a poor sort, even for a woman, if I did not lend such little powers of intellect as I have to the brave man who has stayed by me in desperate trouble, and who does not even seem to remember it? Besides, this is only a matter of association and memory. I know a trick we can use."

"What is it?" I asked, eagerly.

"Don't let's talk aloud about it," she warned. "Remember the way the man Brinn came in upon us in the other place."

"I do," said I, instinctively lowering my voice and looking about. "Where do you suppose he had kept himself in that place? And do you suppose this is a trick-box here, too?"

"How can we tell?"

"We can't."

I got up from my seat and went across to the door that led into the hall. I stooped to the keyhole and looked out. It was dark outside, but before I could rise to a standing posture again there was a hand upon the knob of the door, and next moment the Chinese cook opened and stood before me.

I rose and looked at him, and he grinned with delight at me. But he did not seem at all concerned over the position which I had tried to cover when his sudden entrance surprised me. He looked at once at the table and at the tray. Then his face became wreathed in the most beatific smiles, and he began to bow elaborately to both of us with his hands over his stomach, as if the gesture were to indicate satisfaction he felt in that region at our evident appreciation of his cookery.

I recovered. "Yes, we liked it, John," I said. Then to Miss Kingslee: "This man professes to be deaf and dumb. I don't know whether he is or not."

She looked up at the Chinese without changing countenance. "Thank you very much, John," she said sweetly, as if he were an old friend.

He looked at her much as he had at me on his earlier appearance, and then repeated the gesture of shaking head and pointing finger. I stood behind him now and watched him for a moment. Abruptly a method for testing his hearing came to me, and I acted on it instantly.

"Put up your hands, John," said I with sudden harshness. "I have the drop on you."

The bent little figure straightened. I felt sure that he started, ever so slightly. But next instant he stooped again and took up the tray. Turning, he smiled again on me, with no betrayal in his little eyes of emotion of any kind save pure pleasure in the fact that we had eaten practically all his provisions.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PLAN EVOLVES

WHETHER or not we had been overheard in our scheming we could not judge. If we had, it would put an end to our plan before we had had a chance to try it. That the Chinese cook had been spying outside our door there seemed little reason to doubt, and I was almost satisfied that he could hear. Trickster of a tricky race! Why should I expect anything else than that such a game might be played upon us. Of course our captors knew that we should try to plan escape. Of course they foresaw our conversations on the subject. It was simpler to have a convenient spy than to keep a guard with us all the time.

But we had discussed it in whispers together only a moment or two, when Miss Kingslee said, very aptly, that we were wasting time. If the man had discovered our intention, there was no help for it. If he had not, there was no reason why we should not try to execute it, such as it was. We should not make our situation worse by attempting to get word of it to our outside friends. So we laid aside useless fears.

But she would not tell me her part of the scheme till I should evolve mine.

"Construct the note that you will be willing to have sent by the hand of an enemy," she said, "and then I will show you how to send it."

"Very well," I assented. "Let us meanwhile avoid the appearance of plotting. We cannot tell how much we may be watched. I can feel eyes upon us from every direction by the exercise of small imagination. Don't you think the best plan will be to feign resting—perhaps to get a little real rest, before we put the thing to the test?"

She agreed to that and presently she left me and went to the inner room to lie down. We had been told that our arch enemy would not call upon us again till evening

and we had several hours' time in which to get some needed sleep. I, myself, lay down on the old upholstered couch in the parlor, and my brain was soon busy with my problem. But before I had thought it out, I fell a victim to my own weariness and slept.

I was awakened by the opening of the door from the hallway, late in the afternoon. I had wound my watch, which had not yet run down, and it showed five o'clock when I looked at it, after discovering that our Chinese acquaintance was our visitor. He grinned at the process, as if he were highly pleased with that as he was with everything else we did.

He appeared to be preparing for the serving of an evening meal of some sort, and did not try to communicate with me beyond his humorous display of teeth and facial contortions. He fussed about for some time, while I lay and watched him, and it was while he was busy that my idea came to me.

Canfield was the man of all men to whom I would prefer to send a message, if a message to any one were possible. So, with him in mind, I had set to work. How to convey a hidden meaning that he would understand and that could not be read by the eager eyes of our foes—that was the problem.

I could depend on his wit. I could also depend on his honest friendship for me and on his courage and ability in finding means to help us, if I could once hint to him anything that would lead him to a real clue. Slowly I thought out the details while I followed the soft movements of that panther-footed Oriental. And when inspiration came at last, I constructed my message with hope leaping into my brain like liquor.

Patience and skill and a little time were the requisites for the working out of the scheme, but I would play for them. First I made up my mind to try a method of leading on my chief enemy. I must await his coming and his questions, before I could gain my primary point. I must have his permission to send a message. Offhand that sounds like an arduous task for a man in my position to set himself. But I had a hope. He believed that I was connected with the police.

I should tell him that I was not and offer to prove it by simply referring to Canfield in the most natural way in the world. I

would write a note to my chief which should purport to state that I had decided to leave the paper and ask either for a letter of recommendation or for a long leave of absence. If my enemy had a real reason for finding out whether or not I was in the detective service, this would furnish an easy method. If he would undertake to carry a message to Canfield, it would then be only a matter of so wording it as to wake that astute fellow's suspicions, and my inspiration lay in that portion of the plan.

 THAT book! It lay in my desk at the office, still open, in all probability, at the place where I had stopped reading. If I could direct Canfield to the page I had last read, and could then add an invisible message, he would not miss the point. It seemed like a gift of fortune, the opportunity.

What I needed more was simply the nerve and the self-possession to carry it out. And my first brain-draft of the letter I meant to send shaped itself as I worked, till I could fairly see it in my mind's eye:

DEAR CANFIELD:

I've made up my mind to leave the paper. It's a bit sudden, I know, but I am sure you will understand, and will be good fellow enough to give me a letter of introduction to use when I reach New York—for that is where I am planning to go. If you will, send it to me at my new address, below.

I did not finish the story I was on when I left the office, last night, but you will find the book in my typewriter-desk, open at the place where I was working. Read a page or two and you will readily grasp the plan of work.

I will let you hear from me again later.

Yours truly,
HAWTRY.

How it excited me! The idea seemed such a big one that I could hardly see the difficulties in the way of conveying my message. Of course, granted that Miss Kingslee was as good as her word and produced some means of writing an invisible message that would show when heated, here was the plan, surely, that would make Canfield apply the necessary method to read it.

He could hardly fail to catch my meaning if he found the book as I had left it, and read the pages I had last been reading. Of course he would know that the letter meant nothing, if it did not contain a hidden meaning. I would trust his keen mind for that. If he read the story of the artful message in "Anne of Geierstein," the thing would

be clear to him. Now, what should I tell him in the "blind" portion of the note?

I had made several mental drafts of that. I will not quote them here, for they were mere experiments. I came to the conclusion quickly that I needed more information before I could impart much; and this proved to be the most difficult thing that faced me. It was while I was racking my brains for the needed materials that our supper came up from the kitchen downstairs, and Miss Kingslee came from her room at the sound of rattling dishes.

I said nothing to her at first regarding my scheme. Our Chinese nuisance lingered and when he at last went out, he closed the door with a softness that was only too suggestive of an intention to listen. Moreover, something else that chanced took my thoughts irresistibly, as we sat at table once more, and her beautiful eyes looked into mine. ,

I waited upon her with a pleasure that was foreign indeed to our predicament, but, with the stir of anticipated action in our own behalf waking my hope, I could not fail to feel even more keenly the delight of her companionship.

And it was then, suddenly, without premeditation or even present thought of the matter, that the question which had earlier harassed me was answered. As she lifted her hands, with almost the first movement to arrange the things before her on the table, I saw that all the slender fingers of both were ringless!

We had lived much in the brief time we had been together. Love is a thing that brooks obstacles of convention no more than products of the locksmiths' art, and the little winged god was never yet known to avoid times and places of danger and risk. Indeed, it is one of his favorite methods of tricking the unwary, to make common interest of common peril. Our peril had been—was still—vital. And love was using his opportunity with me. I knew it.

CHAPTER XV

STRATEGY OR VIOLENCE?

WE DINED almost in silence. I could not have said commonplace things to her just then. With the knowledge freshly gained, despite our doubtful future, my heart was afire. I sat and made pretense of

eating, because I could not feel the mere bodily hunger, now, in my hunger of heart. She seemed so close to me, so much the ward of my strength and my courage, that the tenderness grew toward her with every passing moment given to thought.

I found it hard to look at her, because I knew the thing was showing in my eyes, and my advantage now was too great to be taken. Why should I think she would return such a mad passion, so hastily born, as it must appear to her? And would I not be violating her trust if I showed it, when to show it meant to demand requital?

I shall never forget that half-hour we sat there together in that little room, with the vital things buried in our hearts and only pretense on the surface. For she, too, was distraught and seemed to be far away in mental distance from the moment. We could not talk of the one thing that would have drawn me from my embarrassment. But I will not say that it was not sweet, that communion of reserved silence. One can not stop the revealing transfer of impressions from mind to mind and heart to heart. They go merrily on, despite all the firm sealed lips and averted eyes.

It was a rude break that came to put an end to it. No less a thing than the sudden and unceremonious entrance of the man Brinn. But he did not come alone. His master was with him, somewhat to my own relief. And then followed a scene that was as highly absurd as it was curious.

"Please pardon an early call," said our chief captor, as the Chinese cleared away our tray. "I have much to attend to and I must finish what I have to do here as soon as possible."

He looked from one to the other of us with a suave smile that contrasted significantly with the black looks of Brinn, who simply stared at me with the plainest gaze of baleful hatred that a man could show.

"I want to introduce myself to you and I want you to tell me the truth about yourselves. I am Wendon Griffith."

I started. I had heard the name. Wendon Griffith was a mine-owner who lived in the neighboring county. He was a man of standing in his community. I had never seen him, but I believed instantly that this fellow was lying. Still, if he was, why had he adopted this particular name? Recollection, of course, associated the surname with the name Griff, which had been

bandied about on the wharf the night before. It was enough to hold speculation in suspense.

But I was full of my own plan.

"I am Graham Hawtry of the *Globe*, Mr. Griffith," I said.

His eyes widened a bit. Then he nodded slowly.

"Oh, yes, of course," he remarked. "That is the natural thing for you to do—pose as a newspaper man. But I said I want frankness."

"Just so," said I. "You have it. I am a newspaper man. You think I belong to the police and that you are going to get certain information from me. Is that why you have been holding me instead of dropping me into the river?"

He raised his brows.

"I want the information you can give me," he said. He smiled rather less than previously. "If you don't choose to give it to me, I shall have to try to find means of persuading you. But don't try subterfuge."

"There is no subterfuge about it," I answered. "I was sent out—with others—last night to report the facts connected with the death of Detective Dan Mather. I was caught by your gang because I happened to take the wharf route to reach the Court Street bridge. This young lady was also caught, because she happened to see the girl you carried off and to follow her with hope of being of some assistance. Naturally we desire nothing so much as release."

"I suppose it is natural," said Griffith, smiling again. "It is also natural, is it not, that I prefer to keep you in hand?"

"Of course. But why should you hold us? The only thing I know about you is that you are not Wendon Griffith, and that is merely a matter of reasoning."

He laughed pleasantly, his black eyes glittering with sheer amusement.

"And you expect me to believe you, then, when you do not credit my statement?"

"Mine is easily susceptible of proof," I responded.

"Is it, indeed?"

"Certainly. Send a message to Howard Canfield, city editor of the *Globe*, and he will tell you."

"A message?"

He raised his mobile brows at me again and I recognized that I had been precipitate. He regarded me quietly.

"What sort of a message could I send to Mr. Canfield?" he asked.

"Send it by some safe mouth or hand, and satisfy yourself whether he knows me as one of his reporters."

He laughed again.

"So you were on the murder story last night, were you?"

"Yes."

"Then you are the reporter who disappeared. The papers are full of you."



I HESITATED, with alarm in my soul. This was a bad mix. Naturally he would not take a message of any kind to Canfield from the man who was supposed to have been involved in the trouble on the river-front. Inquiry and suspicion would be too prompt and dangerous as to where the messenger had come from.

"Yes," I admitted helplessly, "I suppose I am. I have not seen the papers."

"Well, I'm hardly likely to send a messenger with a communication from you to a newspaper, am I, under such circumstances?" he inquired mildly.

"I suppose not," I admitted.

"You might telephone," he suggested, "except for the fact that there is no phone in the house."

He seemed to consider this a pleasantry.

"I might run over to the corner drug-store for the purpose," I answered.

"You are facetious," said he, but the expression of his eyes changed toward me at the moment. "You insist that you are Graham Hawtry, do you?" he asked, after an instant's pause.

"I do."

"And the young lady's name?"

He turned and looked at her with admiration plain in his eyes.

"My name is Kingslee," she answered him, as I hesitated.

"Ah, yes—also among the missing," he commented meditatively.

"If you are telling the truth," he said, regarding us with a glance that seemed almost regretful, "I am sorry that you are here."

"Sorry!" I echoed. "Let us go, then!"

He turned and looked at Brinn, with a quizzical grin overspreading his face. That individual was as glowering of countenance as ever. He almost showed his teeth at the suggestion.

"It seems to be obviously distasteful

as an idea to Mr. Brinn," said Griffith.

Brinn swore just under his breath. The motion of his lips showed me the oath, while his eyes roamed over me with slow satisfaction in the fact that I was still a prisoner and not yet out of reach of his arm.

"If I could prove to you that I am Graham Hawtry, reporter on the *Globe*, Mr.—Griffith, what would you do with me then?"

"I might turn you over to Brinn," suggested my enemy, who was evidently able to read eyes. He rose as he said it. Then with a sudden short laugh, he added, "And I believe I will. Perhaps he can persuade you to tell me the truth."

I did not know how much he meant by this, but as I sat still and watched him go to and out of the door, while the man who had conceived such a malevolent hatred for me stood still in the room, mad alarm seized me. It looked as if he meant it. Had he made up his mind so quickly? Did he mean to dispose of us now, and had he turned the task over to the beast who looked upon us with the eagerness of a blood-hungry tiger?

The three of us who were left in the room stood still and gazed at one another in silence. There was no pretense among us now. We heard retreating footsteps go down the stairs. We heard voices for an instant. Then a door closed, and all was still.

Brinn turned to me with a grin drawing his thin lips across his teeth in the cruelest of smiles.

"Me," he said, "I'm in charge!"

He stared at me for a long minute, while my blood was heating as if his very eyes were fire to it. Then he turned away slowly, with a little snicker of contempt. I watched him while desperation took the place of hope and plans. I saw no chance in all the world, if that devil were to have his will.

Suddenly, as his back was for the instant toward me, impulse caught me irresistibly and reason lost her repressive grip. On the table beside me lay a queer old solid ornament of glass, with colored flowers in the heart of it. A thousand old homes have them still. Without waiting to weigh my hazard, I seized it, and next moment had hurled it with all my strength at the vicious brute, as I would have hurled it at a savage animal.

It struck! I saw the start and quiver of his frame. Then I saw the wavering pause and he swayed. The thing had done its work. Instinctively I leaped forward and caught him in my arms, as the glass weight dropped with a single dull, heavy thud to the rug.

CHAPTER XVI

FATE TURNS A TRICK

NEVER have I done a thing with so little premeditation. The act was complete and its amazing success was evident before I actually realized what it was I had attempted and how I had taken the lives both of myself and of my dear companion into my hands.

But it had succeeded. I had struck an effective if not a fatal blow at the man who had been left to guard us. I had felled him. He lay unconscious in my hands, wilted. I was afraid indeed, that I had killed him, though I can not pretend that in that moment of tremendous excitement, I felt any deep regret over it.

But I would take no chances with the marvelous freak of fate in so playing into our hands. I turned him on his face on the rug and knelt upon him, drawing his hands back and throwing one of them up into the effective hammer-lock, familiar to every schoolboy. Then I looked up.

Doris Kingslee stood staring at me with her face gone white as a face can turn. Her hands were reaching out to me as I knelt. It was one of the most touching gestures, utterly unconscious, that I have ever seen. But it lasted only a second, and then she was herself again, quick, efficient, inventive.

She knew what I needed, anticipating my thought and quick to find the resources of the place. She ran to the curtains by the front windows and seized upon the cords that tied them back. They were ornamental cords, but stout for all that, and in another minute I had tied my prisoner's hands with a pair of them and was binding his feet with two more, while we talked gaspingly of what I had done.

I turned the man upon his back again, when I felt certain that he was as secure as I could make him. His face was a livid pallor. He was doubtless badly hurt. But we could not hesitate now if we were to take

advantage of this chance. Supposing the Chinese cook alone to be below-stairs, if even he were there, opportunity surely offered for at least the girl's escape. I felt for Brinn's gun. I was certain that he must have one on his person. But I could not find it, and I dared not waste precious time in looking for it.

Miss Kingslee, indeed, was already at the door and had opened it into the hall, before I finished my work. When I rose and stepped to her side, she was peering down a short hall toward stairs that led to the lower floor. We stood together for an instant and then, without a word, we started, with only one thought in the world and that to reach the outer air and the public road, if road there were at hand.

But as we reached the head of the stairs and started down, I stopped her.

"Wait!" I said. "Let me look for the Chinese first!"

I swept her behind me and ran down the steps swiftly but as softly as I could. I paused by the door in front and looked about at the still rooms. There were two which opened off the hallway. Back toward the rear, there was no sign that any one was about. I waited an instant, debating whether to make a rush from the front door, the locks of which were under my hand, or wait till I made sure the Chinese was not on the lookout to take a pot-shot at us as we went. And then, I decided in favor of the former plan and beckoned to Miss Kingslee.

She had obeyed me literally. She stood at the top of the stairs and had waited there with perfect docility till I signaled. Now she came running down toward me promptly. I turned to look out through the window at the side of the front door, curious as to whether I knew the neighborhood, and I had time to see a rough, unpaved wagon-road, and a building on the farther side, directly opposite, upon which hung the sign of a saloon, with the odd name Adam Madden upon it in gold letters that shone in the rays of an early arc-light. It had all the marks of an outlying road-house upon it, and a run-down old motor-car was standing out in front.



AND then, all at once, I heard a stumbling sound on the stairs behind me, then a little cry, and I turned just in time to see my little compan-

ion falling forward toward me, her face twisted with pain, and her hands outstretched in clear indication that she was helpless to save herself.

I sprang forward to catch her. She was perhaps half a dozen steps from the bottom, and I leaped to the second step to meet her fall. Next moment she was down and in my arms, but moaning with pain, her lips white and her fair brows drawn together till the crease between them looked like a cut; and I stood holding her in terror of what had happened.

"Oh, my ankle!" she groaned. "Oh, I have turned it so terribly! I'm fainting! I can't help it—I'm going! Please, please, don't stop! Go on!"

I lifted her and carried her to the door. Oh, tricky fortune! What a deal to serve us! I tried the door with one hand, while I held her in my arms. It was difficult but I found the lock. I sprung back the bolt and threw off the burglar-chain that was also upon it. I fumbled then with the knob, for the latch resisted obstinately. And then I looked out through the glass and saw on the path, again turning in toward the door, the man who had just before left the place—Griffith himself, and two others, coming back!

The girl in my arms had fainted dead away! There was no chance whatever for me to carry her out and past that trio in front. At the same instant I was sure that I heard sounds in the rear and became certain that the Chinese must be there, else how could the burglar-chain have been replaced on the door out which his master had passed? We were caught and completely helpless. What was to be done?

If we were found so close to escape, the fact would ruin all further chances for us. They had been lax, or at least, they had underrated our prowess and the possibilities we might discover to our advantage. Finding us on the threshold of freedom, they would put an end to opportunity in the most effective manner. I thought it all out in flashes of comprehension. And then I turned suddenly and ran back up the stairs with Doris Kingslee in my arms, into our room again, and shut the door upon myself.

It was the saving of the only good that remained to us. Perhaps some other man would have found a better thing to do. I have reviewed the matter often and have

still to think of a wiser plan. And the event could hardly have been better for the girl had I given up my life there in that hallway, or on the road in front of the house, attempting the impossible.

 I LAID my precious burden on the couch where I had slept. Then, without time to attend to her, I turned and looked at the man on the floor. He lay still, firmly bound as ever, his eyes closed, the pallor unrelieved. Perhaps he was dead! But whether he was or not, I must make way with him in some fashion. I went to him, felt for a heart-beat and found one.

Then, ruthless again, I took out my handkerchief and forced it between his teeth and into his mouth, stuffing it tight, till I thought he would choke upon it if he ever recovered from the blow I had struck him. I grabbed a little scarf from a small chair-back near at hand and tied it around his head over his mouth, to make the gag as effective as possible; and then, on the spur of the moment, I rolled him under the very couch on which Doris Kingslee lay.

I looked again at the girl. Her eyes were open. She was very pale, but she had come out of her faint.

"Does it hurt you cruelly?" I asked her.

She looked about without answering as I knelt down beside her and panted out my question. But her hand came out and rested on my head, with a gesture that was like a caress.

"We lost!" she said.

"Yes," I answered, taking her fingers in mine. "We lost. Perhaps it was a hare-brained attempt. But they don't know yet that we tried, unless the Chinese knows it."

"I am not so much hurt as I thought, I believe," she said with a show of determination to make little of it.

She tried to sit up but the first movement of her foot wrung a fresh moan from her. I pressed her firmly back to her place, while I heard the door below open and close and the sound of footsteps in the hall.

"Be quiet," I told her. "It is the only way."

She lay still. I sank down into a chair beside her, almost exhausted by my sustained exertions. I had not had a moment of rest since I had thrown the glass ornament at the head of Brinn. I was well

winded. I expected that we should have another visit at once from some of the other men and that there was the slimmest chance in the world that I could carry out the plan that had formed in my mind.

I meant to keep the fact that I had struck one blow for liberty a profound secret. If Brinn remained unconscious, there was a possibility that I might compass it for a brief time. What it might avail me I did not know, but he would be one enemy the less so long as he was in my hands. His pockets might be full of keys and contain the weapon I had not been able to find, and I meant to have another search of them, if I might. I would never let him out of my hands alive, if I could avoid it, till there was safety ahead for us. He would kill me if he lived to have the try, now; there could be no doubt of that. If he were dead—well, I had struck in self-defense as surely as any man ever did.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOCKET

WE HEARD much tramping about down below, then there was a footstep on the stairs, and presently Griffith himself put his head in at our door, with a peculiar look on his face. He looked at me and then at Miss Kingslee.

"Where's Brinn?" he demanded.

I feigned surprise.

"Why, didn't he go down with you?" I asked.

"No," he replied, and scowled. But he did not suspect so quiet-looking a pair as we were of having bested the outlaw. "He must have left the house as soon as I went out, though."

He looked down at the lock on the door with curious anxiety. I grasped the reason; he had found it unlocked. When he looked up at me and grinned, I understood why. He believed I had not been aware of the fact. I looked back at him with all the indifference I could assume and he laughed at me outright. Then, withdrawing his head, he shut the door and I heard him lock and bolt it, as I had not heard the locks before.

I stood up and swung the heavy chair, in which I had been sitting, before the door. Then I reached under the couch, caught the man there by the feet and dragged him

out. The floor was a fairly good, hardwood one, which had once been smoothly varnished. I made almost no sound in the process of bringing the unconscious fellow again to light. I bent and felt of his head where the glass had dealt its blow. There was a huge swelling there; that was all I could ascertain. I tested his bonds again. Then I picked him up—he was a huge burden and the effort was all my strength could endure—and carried him hastily into the inner room and so through to the kitchen beyond.

There I laid him down and searched him again as fruitlessly as before, while my thoughts ran ahead of my actions. Finding neither keys nor gun, I wasted no time over my disappointment, but went at once back to the bedroom. I caught a pair of heavy blankets from the bed, and, going out again, I spent five long minutes rolling Mr. Brinn in them.

I wanted to provide as far as possible against any noise he might make, should he come unexpectedly back to consciousness. I wanted to muffle him, as it were. And when I had accomplished this as far as possible, even pinning the blanket about him, with pins I discovered on a tray in the bedroom, I opened the doors of the cupboard under the sink, and pushed and jammed his inert body into the cavity there, shutting the doors upon him once more, with the hopeful feeling that I had disposed of him for the time being.

It had its ludicrous side. I have laughed about it since, though you may readily imagine that I did not then. My methods were homely, but I submit that they were effective. And I went back to my little companion, determined to play our last card as carefully as if our failure had not occurred.

She still lay quiet on the couch, but she looked up eagerly at me when I came in.

"Now," said I, "have you looked at the ankle?"

"Yes," she answered. "It is swollen, but it is not out."

"May I examine it?"

She extended her foot. She was shaking with agitation, but she had taken off the shoe and the poor little member showed that it had had a bad twist. I have a slight knowledge of such matters, and a cursory examination was enough to show that it had probably not actually turned out of

the socket. Unfortunate as it was, fatal as it had seemed at the moment, I found no sign in the girl's face that she gave up hope.

"You are hard to down, are you not?" I commented.

"Why shouldn't I be, when you stand by me so?" she replied, and I saw the sudden tears spring into her eyes.

The thing nearly cost me my self-control. I knew now, past peradventure, that this girl was the girl of my heart. I loved her! I cared not what mystery there might be in it, or what barrier between her and me, I loved her! I looked away from her because I could not bear her eyes any longer just then.

"You must put some hot or cold water on that as soon as may be," I told her. "I have no idea we can get any one else to help you, here; will you let me?"

She smiled at me.

"If you will help me get to the other room, I think I can manage for myself," she said.



SHE sat up, waited a moment to test her strength, then reached out her hand to me. I lifted her, with my arm around her, and we tried together to make progress across the room. It went well enough for a moment—better than I had expected. I supported her and she hobbled jerkily along till we neared the farther door. There we paused to rest and I pulled a chair to her so that she could sit down. Some noise below made us wait and listen for a time, and she put her foot up on the rung of a second chair to lighten the suffering. And then, when the sounds down stairs quieted, she rose again, with both hands clinging to me, and I helped her once more.

This time, however, luck was against us. We stood almost on the edge of the rug and she made her first little hop on its treacherous footing. I do not know just how it happened. It was quick, as such things always are. But I suddenly felt her slip and sink, and then, down went the injured foot to the floor with her weight upon it, and she cried out and went limp under my hands.

She would have fallen if I had not held her. I knew almost at once that she had fainted again, and I eased her little figure down to the floor, with pity and tenderness

overflowing for her. I left her for an instant and ran to the bath for water. When I came back, I bathed her forehead and face with the cold liquid till she opened her eyes again. Then I brought a cushion from the couch and put it under her head and another under her foot.

I bent over her and she looked up at me seriously, wanly.

"I know what you will say," she said, slowly, "but do you know, the only chance for your life is for you to try to fight your way to freedom and forget me, till you can come back after me?"

I said nothing. I would never leave her for an instant in such hands, even if I believed I had the slightest show of success in the method she described. I ventured to put my hand upon her hair.

"Do you feel better?" I asked.

She suddenly caught hold of my hand and held it close to her face.

"How can you make such a sacrifice for me?" she asked.

I looked at her with my heart in my throat. It would have been so easy to answer that question with the truth then! But I held my peace, for honor's sake. Presently I lifted her again and put her in the largest chair, pulling up another for the foot-rest. She laid her head back and closed her eyes. I turned away and went to straighten down the turned-up rug, in mechanical fashion.

On the floor I saw a small object that had evidently fallen there within the past minute. I stooped and picked it up. It was a locket and open. A photograph, cut down to a size to fit the trinket, had fallen from its place and lay at one side.

I picked it up also, but as it lay in my hand, I could not avoid looking down at the writing that was so plain upon the back of the picture:

Doris, with love
from Arthur

It stabbed like a physical pain. She had told me her brother's name was Ned. This, then, was no brother, this handsome chap into whose pictured countenance I looked next moment. It could only be as I had thought—a lover! Why feed false hopes with notions of other men friends or relatives? There were plenty of reasons why the rings might not have been upon her

hands—fear of robbery, for instance—or robbery already committed, of which she had not told me. She was capable of such silence on what she would think the least of our troubles.

I looked back at the lovely, quiet face, and knew myself for the fool I was, while the pain settled into the very fibers of my heart. And I knew, too, that if the choice were given me, I would choose rather to lose the life I had already jeopardized than to lose this girl I had known a single day.

CHAPTER XVIII

A LINGERING HOPE

IT WAS almost as if I fled from her, when I laid the locket on the table at her side and went back through the flat to the kitchen where lay my concealed prisoner. I turned to the active thing, because I could not endure passive inaction after that discovery. And I looked into that dark little cavity under the kitchen sink and felt of the blanketed figure there, with a sort of fierce brute joy over the one savage bit of work I had done, as if it were an antidote to the injury I had received from fate.

I found the man still warm. I put my hand in beside his neck and felt the pulse in the jugular. He was not dead. In fact, he seemed strangely alive after the treatment I had given him. He seemed still unconscious, however, and I shut the door upon him again, with the feeling that he was to be reckoned out of the rest of this struggle.

Again I went through the apartment, looking for the slightest opportunity to make an opening in its sealed outlets or for any tool or implement with which I could make one. I found nothing. The work of preparing this place for a prison had been well done.

When I went back, at last, to the room where Doris Kingslee sat, ready to serve the need of her injury, I found her sitting upright in her chair, seemingly waiting for me.

"The ankle?" I asked, at once.

She held up her hand.

"Don't think of that now," she answered. "It can wait. It is not so bad. I—I have an idea."

I looked at her in wonder. Her face was pale and her lips had the look of suffering written upon them as plainly as I have

ever seen pain in a human face. But she would not listen to a protest.

"Have you thought again of your message to friends?" she whispered, with insistence in her voice.

"Yes," said I wonderingly.

"Then let us prepare for it. What do you want to say in invisible writing?"

I stared at her. This was to the purpose, certainly. But what plan could she have evolved? I had had no opportunity to think more of my own. But as I looked down at her, some trick of memory and imagination abruptly served to bring up before my mind a fragment of the scene my one glimpse out of doors had grasped, and the bitterness of our earlier defeat suddenly turned to hope once more. I started to burst out with the idea that flashed across my mind.

She put her hand up swiftly and touched my lips. Strangely like the thing she had done in the darkness at our first strange meeting!

"Wait!" she said. "Don't speak it aloud."

I whispered:

"We are opposite a road-house belonging to a man named Adam Madden," I told her. "Canfield will find that place, if we can only get that much information to him. I saw the saloon through the glass beside the front door when we tried to escape."

She looked at me long and earnestly.

"All right," she murmured, after a moment. "And what will be your ostensible message?"

I sat down beside her and repeated carefully the note I had so studiously constructed. Her eyes lighted.

"Now," she said, "you will find a little pitcher of so-called cream—milk, let us say—that I saved from supper, behind that picture on the stand, over there. Bring it to me. There are no pens here, so you will have to sharpen a match for me. Simply make a point on it, so that I can write with it."

I found the tiny pitcher with a bit of milk in it, as she directed me. I carried it to her. I found my little penknife still undisturbed in my vest pocket, and with it I sharpened a match, under her supervision. Without more ado she dipped the wooden point into the milk and wrote carefully across the top of a sheet of paper she had already at hand.

I followed the movements of her fingers absorbedly. This is what she wrote, with frequent redippings of her point:

Prisoners in house opposite
Adam Madden's road-house.

When she had finished it, the fine white lines on the paper gleamed for a moment, then faded to nothing, and the page was as clean as before.

"Will it—" I began, then stopped.

"Yes," she said. "I have done it many times in school-days."

"Then," said I, "write the body of the visible letter below it. We'll have to use pencil for that."

"You must do that," she replied. "But you must do it in the presence of the man Griffith. He will be less suspicious than than he would be of a ready prepared note."

"Of course," I answered.

Mercurial hope climbed high. I felt exultant. I believed some hook or crook could be devised by which we could prevail upon our captor to send a letter for us. Our plan was ready. I could base sanguine expectation upon it. Time was the only thing needed.

But my companion was wiser than I.

"That is not all," she said quietly. "We must have a way to persuade Griffith to send the note. That must depend upon you and your diplomacy. He will never send a simple message like that. There is no reason why he should. You must find out what he wants to learn from you and then bargain with him for it, finally agreeing to get the information for him from Canfield."

I grasped at the notion. Perhaps it could be made to do the trick. I exclaimed over it. She smiled at me anxiously.

"It isn't done yet," she said. "Now, take this sheet of paper and put it with those over there on the stand, where I found it. I think it would be wise to put it about third from the top. If you get a chance to write at all, you will get a better effect by discarding a sheet or two before completing your note."

"I must get that particular sheet," I commented, struck by the idea. "Suppose they get mixed?"

"Bend a corner of this one so that you will know it," she suggested.



I FOUND the hour that followed one of the hardest I have ever experienced. Suspense was at fever heat. There was the man I had overpowered, lying in my improvised cache. There was no judging how long I could keep him so concealed. Griffith had already missed him and must now be looking for him. Would they ever think of making a search of the upper floor for him? Would they become suspicious that I had had something to do with his disappearance? The thing must appear strange indeed to them. In the meantime, this hope of ours, thin as air, was the only dependence we had. We were like children indeed in our reliance on fortune. We did not even know that Griffith would come back to us and so give us the opportunity we needed to carry out our scheme.

I wandered about the apartment in helpless unrest. Again and again I looked at my prisoner in the kitchen cupboard. Again and again I tried windows and doors. Miss Kingslee would not let me attempt to do anything for her ankle. She insisted that it was as well off as it could be. She herself bound it up in shreds of a sheet I destroyed for the purpose, and allowed me to draw the bandage tight only after she had found it impossible to do the trick alone. And we waited and listened and hoped and waited.

But when the suspense was ended at last, the break came suddenly. I heard rapid footsteps on the stairs, without warning, and Griffith came in as quickly as he could unto the bars on our door.

"Look here!" he said at once, coming across the room to me, while one of his men stood in the door with a drawn revolver in plain sight. "Tell me what you know about Brinn. I left him up here. He's gone and has not returned."

I was not prepared for the demand, but the question served to steady me. I smiled in his face.

"I haven't got Brinn," said I. "If I had been able to keep him here, do you think I would have stayed to tell you about it?"

He looked at me with suspicion sharp in his eyes. I slowly realized that I had made a silly speech. But I looked back at him, and laughed again.

"Is that what you want of me?" I asked. His face changed again. I had assumed

indifference better than I knew and it had some effect.

"No," he said simply, and his mind seemed to be caught away from Brinn for the instant.

"If it will relieve your mind any," I ventured, hoping to repair the break I had made before, "Brinn went out very soon after you did. He has not been in here since."

Griffith stood over me with an absent look in his eyes. Evidently anxiety was keen within him. I looked up at him and came slowly to my determination.

"If I were to admit that I belonged to the police——" I began easily, and stopped to watch the effect of my words.

His eyes gleamed with sudden light.

"Yes!" he cried.

"What is it you wanted to ask me?" I inquired.

He regarded me steadily for an instant with hesitation that seemed foreign to him. Then, abruptly, he blurted out his question.

"Is Laura Lee in the police's hands?" he asked with uncontrolled agitation rising for the moment into his tone.

I studied him.

"If I engage to get you an answer that you can believe, what do you offer me?" I demanded.

I saw the pupils of his eyes narrow, as the liar's always will on the threshold of impromptu deceit.

"Freedom," he said shortly, and smiled his restored smile of suavity.

I feigned to study him again. I tried to show belief in him. Wide-eyed and serious, I took him at his word.

"I believe you mean that," said I, sure that he meant nothing of the kind. "I will engage to get you a truthful answer to that question and also to prove to you that I am a newspaper man, if you will mail a letter to Howard Canfield of the *Globe*. He will answer that question to me, and you will then have no further need to hold me or this girl. We can do you no harm."

He laughed suddenly. "I'll do it!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER REWRITTEN

MY HEART was beating like a trip-hammer. I had hoped that my coolness would last, but it seemed to be leaving

me. My hands were trembling as I rose slowly to my feet and turned to look guardedly at Miss Kingslee.

"I will write now, if there is paper about," I said to Griffith, looking around the room as if in search of writing materials. Then I crossed, with leisurely ease, or such counterfeit of it as I could compass, and took the packet of paper from the stand. Coming back to the table, I sat down and took out my pencil.

Griffith came and stood beside me. I held up the pencil and waited.

"What shall I say?" I asked.

"Write a natural note, asking the question," he dictated a little sharply.

I began:

DEAR CANFIELD:

What can you tell me about Laura Lee? Has she been taken into police hands? I want to know.

I stopped.

"That is a poor start," I said and slipped the sheet of paper aside. "I must have some excuse for asking that question."

"Yes," said my captor, with a queer note in his voice that made me look up.

He was smiling and my growing ease received a check. I went on, however, without waiting. I dared not let him have a chance to look into my face for long now. I wrote again on the second sheet:

DEAR CANFIELD:

I believe I am on the trail of the kidnapped girl, Laura Lee. I am uncertain. Has she been found? I would know if I could see the papers but I am——

I stopped again. Griffith was bending over me and reading as I wrote. His armed retainer stood in the doorway watching the scene curiously.

"He won't understand my not seeing the papers," I remarked. "I take it there has been nothing in them, anyhow, or you would not be asking me this question."

"Exactly," said my captor.

I drew forward the third sheet of paper—that precious third sheet with the bent-over corner—and felt my mouth go dry in my tremendous anxiety. I strove to control the shaking of my hand that came suddenly back again. Then I wrote once more:

DEAR CANFIELD:

I am on the trail of Laura Lee, I think, unless the police have already found her. Tell me whether I am following a false scent. Print an item on the first page in to-morrow morning's *Globe* that will give me the information.

Griffith stayed my hand, while he read what I had written. Then he smiled.

"Well," he remarked, "all right. But how will that prove that you are Hawtry? He knows your writing, I suppose?"

"Yes," said I, "but I can do better than that."

I went on writing:

I did not finish the story I was on when I left the office last night, but you will find the book in my typewriter desk, open at the place where I was working. Read a page or two and you will readily grasp the plan of work.

I paused an instant, then signed my name and looked up. Griffith leaned over me and took up the sheet. He was smiling shrewdly. He read the whole note carefully, then he looked down at me. I could not tell what the look in his eyes meant, but next moment I thought I knew.

"Write one more sheet," he said, quietly, looking at the little pile of paper. "I don't like that expression 'on the trail of,' regarding the girl."

If he had suddenly swung his clenched fist into my face he could hardly have shocked my dizzy brain more. I sat back in my chair and looked up at him blankly, and, for the life of me, I do not know what compelled me to obey him. Only the fact that he walked away from me at the moment, with my letter in his hands, saved me, I am convinced, from betraying myself by my very despair.

He crossed to the stand and brought an envelope that lay beside the remainder of the paper. I looked in utter wretchedness and hopelessness at Doris Kingslee. It was then that I caught a look from her, however, that brought me to myself. The faintest flicker of an eyelash seemed to signal to me that I had no choice but to go on in strict obedience. I bent over the paper, with the heart gone out of me, but understanding that I could only finish the farce.

Slowly and painfully I rewrote my letter, changing its initial phrase, while imagination carried me forward to see Howard Canfield's helpless, useless puzzlement; and our own ruined hopes seemed to stifle me till my brain sickened with my disappointment.

But I finished the task. I watched and listened dully while Griffith read the letter over again aloud and expressed satisfaction. And then I sat in silent apathy, while he promised once more the thing I knew he

would not perform. And presently, he had crumpled my priceless third sheet, put the fourth in the envelope and was gone; and we were once more locked in our prison.



I ROSE to my feet. I could not look at Doris Kingslee. I felt that I was choking, fainting. But fate had not done its worst. While I stood there facing, as I supposed, the deepest depths of despair, one thing more was in preparation. The first warnings of it came to my ears, indeed, without carrying their meaning clearly. I heard sounds, a queer mixture that I could not translate, nor could I locate them for the minute. And then, suddenly, with terror striking in like a chill upon me, I realized that some one was moving in the rear room of the apartment we occupied.

With the certainty that Brinn was making real, perhaps successful, attempts to escape, I turned and rushed through to the back room. I did not reason. I was simply convinced that nothing was too cruel to happen now. And when I reached the kitchen door, I found that instinct had been only too near the truth.

In the middle of the floor, his face wide with genial smiles, stood the Chinese cook, a magazine pistol in his hand! Beside him lay, in a heap, the blankets in which I had wrapped my prisoner. The back door of the flat was open and in it stood Brinn himself, haggard as the dead, but alive and able to hold himself upon his feet!

I myself needed the door-casing for support. I grasped it and held on, while I looked at the two. And it was only in dull fashion that I recognized one more confirmation of my fears, as the Chinese laughed aloud at me.

"Ha!" he cried, as freely as any speaking mortal. "You lockee up Brinn tight!"

CHAPTER XX

LAST STAND

AFTER the first shock of the thing, which was easy enough to understand, I suppose I did instinctively the thing that was the most sensible under the circumstances. I backed out of the doorway and shut the door. Oddly enough I found a key under my hand and I turned the lock. Then I went fumbling back through the

hall as if the half light were not sufficient to guide me. I felt sure that I should stagger if I took my hand from the wall.

I reached the front room to see Miss Kingslee trying to stand beside the table, and I told her in one brief sentence what I could not conceal. She had heard the Chinaman's high-pitched voice.

"Brinn will certainly kill me at the first opportunity," I told her, when I had described what I had seen. "It will be but a matter of minutes, I suppose, till they can come up the front way or break down the kitchen door. I think they will come the front way."

I had a hazy notion that the time had come to stand and sell my life at as dear a price as I could win for it with bare hands against firearms. I considered a notion of waiting by the door and dealing some sort of blow to the first who should open it. But I looked at the girl, and my willingness to die in her cause seemed like a jest. What would it avail her now? The thought of what her situation would be when left alone, sickened me to the heart. I went and stood by her side.

"Doris," I said, forgetting now any other name, "I shall do what I can for you. Griffith may be merciful. Promise him anything to secure your freedom. I am going to try once more to get Brinn. I shall kill him if I can, and a desperate man can sometimes do the impossible. With him out of the way, your chance will not be absolutely hopeless."

She looked up at me and then put her hands on my shoulders.

"Don't despair," she said slowly. "Griffith may not allow Brinn to come."

"Whether he comes now or to-morrow," said I, "he will come to look for revenge. I haven't any delusions of hope on that score. Fate is against us at every turn!"

I had taken her hands, but I knew she must be suffering severe pain, trying to stand. So I seated her gently, and knelt beside her. She had turned her face toward me and I saw her lips beginning to form a reply, when our straining ears caught the sound of swift footsteps.

I started to my feet, but before I could plan a move, I was convinced that the coming man could not be the man I had seen standing weak and sick in the kitchen door but a few moments before. I stood still, therefore, while the door was unbolted

and opened, and Griffith stepped hastily in. In an instant, I saw that he seemed elated and in lighter mood than I had seen him before, and I wondered.

He turned at once to us, while his satellite filled the doorway again as before.

"Well," he cried, "you bested Brinn, didn't you?"

I could hardly suppose that he had come to say this to me. I was a bit surprised that he even knew it yet. But I had only to wait for him to go on.

He shook his head at me, as if with playful intent. Then the secret of his mood came out. He had an evening paper in his hand and he held it up. "I sent your letter to the *Globe*," he announced, laughing, "but I have already my answer in the *Journal*." He pointed to a headline on the first page and I read:

WOMAN NOT LAURA LEE

GIRL IN POLICE HANDS FOUND TO BE
UNKNOWN STRANGER

NO CLUE TO KIDNAPPERS

DETECTIVE MATHER'S SLAYERS ARE STILL AT LARGE
AND GRAHAM HAWTRY NOT YET FOUND.

I stared stupidly at the thing, then at him. There was a queer composite of emotions in his face. But it occurred to me to claim his promise.

"Then," said I, "you can release us now?"

I felt no confidence, only the faintest stirring of anticipation.

"Release you?" he repeated. Then he looked at us both and laughed aloud. "Oh, no," he said easily. "I am not bound to release you. It was not you who got me the answer to my question."



MY HEART could not sink lower than it had been. I simply stood and looked at him, and wondered whether to strike him now and fight my death-battle then and there, or wait to deal with Brinn when he should come. I waited.

"What do you intend to do with us, then?" I heard myself asking.

"Do with you? Oh, I shall keep you for a while yet," he replied, smiling. "No, no, I shall not let you go. You know too much!"

He did not meet my eyes and I had a

chance to deal him one blow, if I had wished to take it. But I pleaded instead.

"You can at least let this girl go," I prayed. "She can promise lifelong secrecy."

He sneered in my face, losing his laugh for a second.

"That is not the plan on which I work," he answered. Then he smiled again, as if highly pleased with all the world. "If you say so," he added, "we'll leave it to Brinn, in the morning. He will like something to say in the matter."

My last spark of hope flickered out. He meant it—or he meant worse.

"Why wait till morning?" I asked suddenly, with a queer eagerness growing slowly somewhere inside me, as I felt that I could better reach out to meet the end than to wait.

He laughed his laugh once more, and bowed to me.

"Brinn is not just in a mood to meet company to-night," he told me. Then with quick decisiveness, he held out the paper to me. "Here, read the news," he said. "It will keep you busy meanwhile."

The paper fell to the floor because I did not take it, but he did not pick it up. He backed a step or two away from me, with a contemptuous smile on his lips, and then he turned and went.

I stood still and stared at the door as it was drawn shut, latched and locked. Then I turned to Miss Kingslee, one last feeble glimmer of a purpose stirring:

"There is not a single chance," I said. "There has not been from the first. Shall we barricade the doors and starve rather than let them in again?"

"Yes," she said.

I did not wait an instant. I swept the loose things carefully from the table, then tipped that heavy piece of furniture softly over and pushed it with the wrinkling rug in front of the door. Behind it I placed the heaviest chair, then the stand and gradually every available bit of furniture in the room, till the barricade looked impregnable indeed.

Then I hastened down the hall and repeated the operation with things from the other rooms before the kitchen door which I had locked. When I went back to Doris Kingslee I was thinking that our windows were safe for two reasons. They were boarded up and any attack upon them

must come from out of doors and must therefore be open to almost completely certain observation.

With the thought ready to tell to my companion for the morsel of comfort it might be to her, I stepped into our now fortified parlor. To my surprise, she sat up erect and flushed in her chair, Griffith's discarded paper in her hands.

"Look!" she cried instantly. "He could not have seen this. This item, inside the paper, says the lost Laura Lee is the sister of Wallace Griffith, leader of the gang that is supposed to have killed Detective Mather!"

I looked. It was there in print and seemed to solve one mystery, at least. But I had hardly time to read it before I felt her hand in mine and turned to look at her again. Her eyes were shining with spirit and something else.

"You don't know yet," she told me, with low-toned eagerness. "I have had no opportunity to tell you. But—the letter—the letter Griffith—Griffis—mailed, carried our message!"

She waited. I stood amazed.

"Our message!" I echoed breathlessly.

"Yes," she said. "Does it seem possible? I—anticipated some slip, just like what did occur. And I—I provided for it!"

"You provided for it!" I cried. "In the name of the shades, how?"

A little smile, almost roguish, lighted her eyes a bit brighter.

"I provided for it when you were not with me," she said again, slowly, "by writing our invisible message on every sheet in the packet!"



A YELL of triumph would not have expressed a fraction of the mad leap of joy that lifted me from the depths; yet I could scarcely suppress one, as I caught her face between my hands and gazed down into it with overflowing thankfulness for the wit and courage and skill that lay behind those star-like eyes. The revulsion of feeling—the transport—was too much for me. I forgot the barrier I had no right to cross. Ruthlessly I held her.

"Doris Kingslee," I said, "no man could look on you and not love you!"

Her face flamed and she shrank as if I had struck her.

"Oh, don't!" she cried and buried her face in her hands.

I stood abashed, ashamed, contrite. But no words of fit apology would come to my tongue. I turned away and sank down upon the couch where it stood at the back of our barricade. But my spirit would not down. Together love and hope were a surging tumult within me. I, too, covered my face, because I dared not look again at her till I should have control.

I found her adjusting her foot upon the chair I had left before her own for the purpose. I rose and went to assist her, quite wordless. When I had done, she murmured a word of thanks without looking up at me. Then she spoke gravely to me,

"May I rest awhile?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered, and went silently back to my place.

Of course I had no intention of sleeping. But I slept nevertheless. When I woke, the gray light of another day was streaking the ceiling, where it crept in through the ventilation holes. Starting up, humiliated, frightened, I saw quickly that things were as they had been. The girl still slept quietly in her chair, our barricade was intact and silence reigned.

I got up as quietly as I could and went on a tour of inspection of our fort. At every point it seemed safe as ever it had been. Feeling thirsty, I went to the bath for a drink. I turned on the faucet in full expectation of a flow of water. A little husky, sucking gasp was all that came from the pipe. The water had been shut off!

My dear companion was still asleep when I returned to see, and I sat down again, to wait and wait. My watch showed seven-thirty—surprisingly late, I thought. What was this gang of thugs doing below-stairs that they had not disturbed us during such a lapse of time? I wondered whether our enemy had discovered that we had fortified. I wondered whether one of the men outside could have attempted to enter the apartment without my hearing him.



I THINK I dozed a little again, as I sat there in the dusk. I remember that it was very suddenly that I found myself sitting up with a strange stinging, pungent smell in my nostrils and a new, paralyzing terror in my heart. I remember how, as I stood up and stared about me, the actuality of all things about me seemed impossible to credit.

But I turned on the electric light above

where Doris Kingslee sat, and looked about me with eyes that shrank from seeing. And there, all about the base of the door I had barricaded and through and under it, at every crack, were wisps and curls and tiny, spreading clouds of blue-gray smoke!

I do not know, whether, in the agony of that moment, I shouted or called out. I know that I looked once at the girl I loved, and then, without thought of any other way, I fell upon our barrier and tore from it piece after piece of the furniture, throwing them aside madly.

I reached the door itself and found it locked and barred as ever. Then I seized the stand that lay beside me, swung it by the slender legs, and struck with all my strength at the panels. They were of stoutest oak and gave back only a hollow boom that meant complete resistance. I heard shouts outside, sudden wild, exultant shouts, and then a shot; and I pictured my fiendish enemy rioting in delight at the plight in which he had involved us.

I turned and ran through the little hall to the kitchen door. The barrier at the back might be less solid. If I could smash out a panel, we might at least creep to the open air. And I attacked the second barricade as I had the first.

There was no smoke here, but, as I worked, I heard other sounds than the crashing din I myself made, and it seemed that those below were wrecking the house, as if in one grand finale of destruction. I did not even try to understand. To me, it seemed that the air about was growing stifling with heat and the fumes of fire, and I fought as one fights for breath.

And then, at last, I reached the door itself. I fumbled over the key, like a clumsy child, my shaking hands seeming like nerveless, uncontrollable things. But I turned it, and threw open the door.

A rush of outdoor air caught me in the face. The back door of the apartment was open also. But, as I gasped and looked, the figure of a man loomed up in it and I saw a pistol that was leveled at me spit a sudden stream of fire. I felt no pain of wound, but I knew his second shot would bring me down. I stooped and seized a chair from the wreck of my barricade, with the desire to strike one more blow, for I knew that fierce, leering face behind the gun was the face of Brinn and my hatred of him seemed then to equal his for me!

‘ But suddenly, in the hall behind me, I heard a shout and the tramp of heavy feet, and, as I struggled up, I was seized from behind and swept aside. And then, two pistol-shots, and I saw Brinn’s figure double up and sink in the doorway, while a voice I knew yelled my name at my very ear!

I fell half fainting against the wall. I saw two huge men in the helmets of the police brush past. And then, before me, his eyes ablaze, and his round head bobbing like a fishing-cork over ripples, I saw Howard Canfield, and heard him howling a crazy mixture of joyous profanity, shreds of information and terms of endearment—for me, while he pawed me like a great affectionate dog!

CHAPTER XXI

AFTER

IT WAS hours before all the story was told. When it was, we knew that “Anne of Geierstein” and the “letters in milk,” as Doris called them, had done their work well for us. They had brought Canfield and the police on the edge of the moment that would have been too late, but not too late. We learned that Hugo Brinn, who had set a smudge at the front door to drive me to face his gun at the back, was dead; that Wallace Griffis and two others, arrested at another rendezvous in the night, were in the city prison; and that Laura Lee, who had been reported missing, simply as a police blind to the criminals, was Griffis’s half-sister, who had damning evidence to give against him and his gang when his trial should come on.

We learned that the man Mallett, under whose name I had fatuously posed, had been found alive in a sack in a room in the warehouse where Doris Kingslee and I had first been imprisoned, and where Laura Lee led the police just after we had been removed. We learned, too, that one of the doors of that room in which we had been kept, opened into the place where Mallett had been put, and that it was drilled with holes through which Brinn had first spied upon us. Through that door, too, he had come silently upon us, in that first sickening surprise he had perpetrated.

Sick of the crimes of the gang, he had deserted that night; and it had been he whom

I had first seen in the shadow of the bridge where I had made my entrance to the wharf. He had turned State’s evidence, had helped to catch Griffis, and would yet help Laura Lee to convict the bandits of a long list of crimes. But neither he nor the woman had known of the house on the suburban road opposite Adam Madden’s saloon.

When Doris was safe with her brother, she promptly collapsed, and came near to being a pretty sick girl.

It was days before she could see me at the Metropole Hotel, and before I met her brother. When I looked in his face, however, I knew once more that I had been a fool of my fears. His was the face, the pictured counterpart of which had fallen from the locket, on the floor of that sealed up room, when Doris had fainted. I found the solution easy, when he was introduced to me as Mr. Arthur Kingslee, and was next moment fondly called Ned by his sister.

But he is a man of singular perspicacity, Mr. Arthur Edward Kingslee. He proved it that afternoon. He invited me to the home at Fairfax, in his father’s name; and then he gave me my chance alone with the sweet girl, who, with ankle properly bandaged at last, lying in an extended morris chair, seemed to have no unalterable objection to one more half-hour of my companionship. What happened in that half-hour I need not now relate. If I had been over precipitate in loving and in telling of my love, I found that forgiveness was not far to seek. Forgiveness, do I say? Yes, forgiveness of the only sort that could absolve me from so heinous an offense.

And when I rose to leave her, in the dusk of another early evening, she looked up at me happily, while I held her slender fingers and kissed them unrebuked. And it was a gift she asked.

“I want you to bring me that old volume of ‘Anne of Geierstein,’ Graham Hawtry,” she said. Then she laughed. “Just think,” she added whimsically, “it was that old book, which Sir Walter wrote almost a hundred years ago, Graham, that really saved our lives. A hundred years before the moment of our need, that brave old author penned the very heart of our message! Doesn’t it—doesn’t it seem like a message across a century?”

THE END

Slatin Pasha Twelve Years Captive of the Mahdists



W. Robert Foran

THERE lives to-day in Khartum, the metropolis of the Sudan, a man whose feelings it would be interesting to analyze. Yet, perhaps, one will never rightly know what he thinks of the present when he remembers the past. One can at most conjecture that his heart must sing a joyful melody when he looks over toward Omdurman and reenacts the terrible twelve years of the past now so completely wiped out. He is not a man to talk much about himself, but he will readily tell you, if you ask him, of the wonderful history of the rise and fall of Mahdism, of the great General Gordon, of Emin Pasha, and of the host of others who have helped to make the Sudan what it is to-day. Of the history, past and present, of the Sudan few men have a more intimate knowledge.

This man is Baron Sir Rudolf Slatin Pasha, the Inspector General of the Sudan. His is a long title, but it does not end there. It is followed by half the letters of the alphabet, denoting knightships of most of the British and foreign orders.

See him at the present time, as I saw him in March, 1909, mounted on a superb Arab charger galloping along the lovely avenues

of modern Khartum, dressed in neat-fitting khaki uniform, his left breast covered by three rows of the ribbons of war medals and orders, and you will wonder of what he is thinking as his sharp blue eyes roam hither and thither.

What a romance his life has been! You, who have read or heard of his horrible sufferings as a prisoner for twelve terrible years in the hands of the fanatic Mahdi and his successor, the Khalifa, may well be astonished to think of what a human being can endure and suffer both morally and physically. He must, indeed, have been possessed of the constitution of a horse and the heart of a lion to have passed through such ordeals and yet look as he does these seventeen years afterward.

Then again see him, as I have seen him, dancing with the keenest, boyish enthusiasm in the ball-room of the Grand Hotel at Khartum, and you will scarcely credit that this little, thick-set man with typically German mustache is over fifty years of age. He is the most extraordinary man; his sufferings have left no visible trace. He enjoys a youthfulness, a strength and freshness quite incredible. The simple, sober life, which his enforced captivity entailed,

has evidently suited him; but at the present time he is making up with whole-hearted relish for the years lost. He attends all the fêtes and, twice or thrice a week, he gives large dinner parties at his house.

Think for a moment of the pleasure Slatin Pasha must experience when, after having eaten for twelve years with his fingers the food of slaves, he now presides in his large, comfortable dining-room over dinners at which are served the choicest dishes, exquisite wines, and waited upon by numerous servants, liveried to perfection. His house, built in the center of a magnificent garden, is one of the most pleasant and well-equipped in Khartum. Here he has gathered about him every conceivable comfort. He has only one worry, according to his own idea—that of having to superintend his retinue of servants. For Slatin is still a bachelor.

Perhaps some of the British officers in the Sudan service are jealous of him. I rather fancy that they are, from all I could learn. The reason is probably because he is the only non-British or non-Egyptian holding high rank in the Sudan—a rank second only to that of Sir Reginald Wingate, the Sirdar.

No doubt this jealousy is also enhanced by the recollection of how Slatin professed the Mohammedan faith during the Mahdi's rise to power. But then, who are we to judge this man, who foreswore the faith of his forefathers in order, as he avers, to instill confidence in the hearts of his wavering army? Many claim that he adopted the Mohammedan religion in order to save his life, but there are others who deny this most warmly. Many a man placed in like circumstances would have acted as Slatin did. Yet, it can not be denied, many others would have acted differently.

Gordon himself, on his return to Khartum before its downfall, was very indignant at Slatin's action. In his Journal he writes with bitterness of the "foreign renegade officers who were ready to change their religion to save their skins." Whatever we may think, we must in all common fairness at least listen to Slatin's own version of his reasons for acting as he did.

THE EARLY FIGHTS OF SLATIN PASHA

BEFORE Slatin Pasha joined the Sudan service under General Gordon he had already enjoyed a fair measure of adven-

ture—more than falls to the lot of most men. In July, 1878, when serving as a lieutenant in Crown Prince Rudolf's regiment, the 12th Foot of the Austrian army, on the Bosnian Frontier, he received an invitation from Gordon to join him and take service under the Egyptian Government. Notwithstanding the fact that he was already engaged in the arduous Bosnian campaign, Slatin was delighted to receive this offer, for it gave promise of more scope for his adventurous spirit.

Prior to this, in 1874, Slatin had undertaken a journey to the Sudan, and had reached Khartum in the latter part of that year. From this point he explored the Nuba Mountains, Delen, and the Golfan Naima and Kadero mountains. But the revolt of the Hawama Arabs curtailed his travels and he was forced to retire to El Obeid, the chief town of Kordofan. From here he returned to Khartum and there met Doctor Emin, who had just arrived in search of adventure.

These two men at once became warm friends. They wrote to General Gordon, who was at that time Governor-General of Equatorial Africa with headquarters at Lado. Gordon invited Slatin and Emin to visit him at Lado, but family affairs and the necessity for completing his obligation for military service compelled Slatin to decline and return to Vienna.

Doctor Emin—afterward Emin Pasha, a name famous in the history of Africa—accepted the invitation and promised Slatin to recommend him to Gordon. He fulfilled this pledge, and it was largely due to Emin that Slatin secured the opportunity to see service under the ill-fated General "Chinese" Gordon.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL AT TWENTY-FOUR

BUT it was not until the conclusion of the Bosnian campaign in December, 1878, that Slatin received permission, as an officer of the reserve, to set out for Africa. He was then only twenty-two years of age.

Journeys in the Sudan were not so luxurious in those days as they are now. To reach Khartum was a matter of much hardship, one item being a camel ride across the desert waste between Suakin and Berber. Slatin finally reached Khartum on January 15, 1879.

The following month Gordon made him

Financial Inspector of the Sudan, and his work in this difficult position was so ably carried out that he was promoted to the Governorship of Dara, comprising the southwestern districts of Darfur. This was no mean task for such a young man, but then Africa has been largely civilized by beardless youths.

The history of the successful administration of this onerous post is a wonderful tale of adventure in itself. It entailed countless numbers of hard-fought campaigns against truculent Arabs. The very night he arrived at Dara to take over his new duties Slatin was compelled to set out on a punitive expedition against Sultan Harun, who was threatening an attack on Bir Gowi, some three days' march south of Dara.

Slatin soon brought him to book and the Sultan paid for his indiscreet rebellion with his life. This initial success earned for Slatin the title of Bey and promotion to the Governor-Generalship of the Province of Darfur. Think of it, a young man not yet five-and-twenty a Governor-General of a large territory! It has been claimed that Africa is the grave of reputations. In a manner of speaking so it is; but it is also the heart of opportunity.

THE RISE OF THE MAHDI

SOON after Slatin assumed charge of his new sphere of work the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed, who came of an obscure and poor family from near the island of Argo in Dongola, rose into prominence. He soon gathered together a tremendous following. One of his earliest converts was Abdullahi bin Mohammed of the Taaisha section of the Baggara tribe in southwestern Darfur. This man lived to be the most influential Khalifa of the Mahdi, and on the latter's death succeeded to the absolute sovereignty of the Sudan.

All attempts to capture these two religious leaders proved abortive and their influence steadily assumed vast proportions. It was a veritable reign of terror. Disaster after disaster overtook the troops despatched against these fanatics. With every success their influence increased.

Then the Mahdi's influence began to be felt in Darfur, and Slatin was continually engaged in fighting, with more or less success, the rebellious inhabitants of his province. His first serious reverse, which was

the beginning of the end, occurred at Om Waragat. In this action his losses were most severe and among the killed were the majority of his best officers. For five days the gallant little band of native soldiers defended their *zareba* against the almost overwhelming odds of the Rizighat Arabs. Once, and often twice, a day they had to repulse determined attacks. Then famine stared them in the face.

Slatin tells how he had not eaten for over twenty-four hours and had thrown himself wearily on the ground in his tent to snatch a few hours' sleep. Suddenly he thought he heard his men eating close to his tent. He called to one of them and asked what food they had found.

"Chickens," they answered.

"Then bring me some, you rascals!" Slatin commanded.

In the darkness they handed him something cold, which he commenced to eat ravenously. But after a few mouthfuls he began to wonder what part of the chicken he was devouring. Striking a match, he saw to his horror that it was part of a human hand—a hand which had belonged to a corpse which his men had disinterred! Slatin then remembered that among his troops were several negroes who belonged to the cannibal tribe of Nyam-Nyam. Not a pleasant experience for a civilized man, but Slatin now will laughingly tell you that he was once a cannibal—but only for two or three seconds.

THE LOSING BATTLES WITH THE FANATIC HORDE

ON THE seventh day Slatin decided to raise his own siege. After destroying all the surplus supply of guns and ammunition, they marched out of the *zareba* and in square formation began their retreat on Dara. In the center of the square were one hundred and sixty wounded. Before they had been an hour on the march they were heavily engaged in a brisk rear-guard action, but eventually the enemy were driven off. Attack after attack was repulsed with heavy loss on both sides. After terrible sufferings and severe fighting, the gallant remnant of Slatin's force painfully limped into Dara.

Then followed a series of minor actions against revolting tribes. Slatin everywhere held his own. If you ask him, he will tell

you that scarcely a day passed during this strenuous time when he was not under rifle-fire. One can not count on the fingers of one's hand the number of times he was wounded. One bullet shattered his ring finger so that it had to be amputated almost to the root. Practically every part of Slatin's body is covered with scars from wounds of bullet or spear.

Then came the news of the awful massacre of Hicks Pasha's army. It was the climax to Slatin Pasha's determined resistance. He recognized that the position was hopeless. For four years he had held his own, more or less successfully, against the onslaughts of the fanatical hordes of the Mahdi. Disloyalty on every side, sickness, famine, and finally the annihilation of the relief expedition sent to his aid, convinced him that further resistance would be without avail and would mean only the sacrifice of his brave followers.

He had used every means in his power to avoid drinking from the bitter cup of defeat, but he finally decided that there was only one course open to him—to surrender on the best terms obtainable. His ammunition was almost entirely exhausted. In all he had but twelve packets of cartridges per rifle.

THE MAHDI'S PRISONER

ON DECEMBER 4, 1883, a messenger arrived from the Mahdi calling upon Slatin to surrender. Three days later Slatin proceeded to Hilla Shiera and surrendered to Zogal, a relative of the Mahdi, who had been commissioned to accept the capitulation of the entire garrison. The Mahdi promised immunity to all the captives and Slatin was forced to rely upon the Mahdi's word for this.

On Christmas Day Slatin had the mortification of seeing his province pass into the hands of the Mahdi, when Sayed Mohammed Khaled, the new Mahdist Governor-General, entered the town of Dara and assumed control. But the new Governor, unmindful of the Mahdi's guarantee, put to the sword and torture many of the loyal inhabitants. The most revolting atrocities took place before Slatin's very eyes, which he was powerless to prevent.

From the day of his surrender Slatin was moved from pillar to post, until in the middle of June he was taken under escort to

Rahad, where the Mahdi had his temporary headquarters. Here Slatin made the acquaintance of the Mahdi and Khalifa, and was forced to take the oath of allegiance to the newly risen Prophet. The Mahdi ordered Slatin to become a Mulazem with the Khalifa Abdullahi. It was the commencement of the horrible years of servitude and torture—years filled with suffering and doubt as to the ultimate end.

On August 22 the Mahdist forces left Rahad for Khartum with the avowed intention of capturing it. Creeping across the desert plains toward Khartum, the great army of the Prophet was daily augmented until it assumed enormous proportions. Its progress was of necessity slow, owing to its vast numbers. Presently they arrived in the neighborhood of Khartum and halted at a place one day's march from the town.

THE FIENDISH CRUELTY OF THE CAPTORS

WHILE camped here Slatin was sent for by the Khalifa and treacherously arrested. Accompanied by a jailer and eight other prisoners, Slatin was taken to a tent and directed to seat himself on the ground. Chains were brought to the tent and two large iron rings, bound together by a thick iron bar, were slipped over his feet and then hammered close. An iron ring was placed round his neck, and to this was fastened a long chain with the links so arranged that he had the utmost difficulty in moving his head. Then he was left in solitude to brood over possible tortures and vain regrets for the confidence he had placed in the Mahdi's pardon.

Early next day the great war drums sounded the advance; the tents were struck, baggage packed and loaded on camels; and the whole camp began to move toward Khartum. The weight of iron on Slatin's feet prevented him from walking, so they brought him a donkey. The long neck-chain—the number of figure-of-eight links, of which there were eighty-three, were each about a span long—Slatin wrapped about his body and in this iron casing was lifted on to a donkey and held in position by a man on either side. At night when they camped a tattered tent was erected for him and a thorn *sareba* built about it. In this Slatin was confined and guarded by a squad of soldiers.

Slatin was neglected during the days of the siege of Omdurman and his food was of the very worst description, such as one would not offer to a dog. He was most carefully watched and permitted to have no intercourse with any one. One day some Mulazemin of the Khalifa came to him and forged on his ankles another set of iron rings and a bar; but, as the weight he already bore prevented him from standing upright, an iron more or less made no difference.

Sometimes the crack of rifles and the booming of guns came to him; he could not learn how the siege was progressing. Days and days of infinite torture filled in the time until, on January 15, 1885, news reached him of the capitulation of Omdurman. Ten days later the besiegers made a terrific attack on Khartum. Toward dawn Slatin was startled by the deafening discharge of thousands of rifles and cannon. This lasted for some minutes and then only occasional shots were to be heard. Finally all was quiet.

THE GHASTLY END OF GORDON

PRESENTLY Slatin saw a party of men leave the Mahdi's quarters and come toward his poor tent. In front marched three evil-looking black soldiers. One of them carried something wrapped up in a bloody cloth. On reaching Slatin the man undid the cloth and displayed the head of Gordon before his horrified eyes! The eyes were half open, the mouth was perfectly natural, the hair of the head and short whiskers were almost white. Such was the end of the brave soldier who had fallen at his post—the end of a man whose courage and utter disregard of fear were truly remarkable, and whose personal characteristics had given him an exceptional celebrity throughout the entire world.

On the fifth day after the fall of Khartum a small body of soldiers appeared at Slatin's tent, and placing him shackled and bound upon a donkey, carried him off to the general prison. Here they hammered on to his ankles a third and exceptionally heavy iron bar. It weighed about eighteen pounds.

Slatin was deposited in one corner of the immense prison *zareba*, and was threatened with an instant flogging if he held any converse with any one. At sunset he was

chained to a number of murderers and other malefactors and all were bound by a long chain round their feet to a tree. At sunrise they were unfastened and sent back to their prison. The food was awful, at least what little was given to Slatin during these days of misery.

He was allowed only *dhurra* (native flour), receiving the same share as slaves. He had to sleep on the bare ground with a stone for a pillow, the hardness of which gave him a continuous headache. For many weary months he fared thus, suffering the torments of the damned—by day scorched by the terrific equatorial sun and by night shivering with the cold.

BAREFOOTED SLAVE TO THE KHALIFA

THEN one day the Khalifa visited the prison and made an inquiry into Slatin's welfare, finally ordering his chains and irons to be struck off him. He was then ordered to swear eternal allegiance to the Khalifa, with which command he deemed it better policy to comply. The wretched prisoner was then ordered to walk beside the Khalifa and follow him to the house. But the eight months of imprisonment in chains had so cramped his legs and feet that Slatin had lost all power of stepping out and could barely keep pace with the slow gait of the Khalifa's donkey. Slatin was then appointed a Mulazemin in the personal service of the Khalifa, with orders to remain all day at the door of his master's house. If the Khalifa decided to ride, Slatin was compelled to walk beside him however long the way.

But this servitude brought a fair number of blessings in its wake. Slatin was apportioned a piece of ground whereon to build a house for himself and his servants—for he was permitted a few by his master—and the latter set to work to build a suitable hut for Slatin's use.

Slatin speaks with a shiver of the days he spent running barefooted upon the red-hot sand of the desert in advance of the Khalifa every time the latter went out riding. During the first few days his feet became so cut and bruised that he could scarcely walk. Seeing this, the Khalifa permitted him to have some Arab sandals made for himself, which, although they gave his feet protection from the sand and stones, yet took off all the skin owing to their roughness.

THE KING IS DEAD; LONG LIVE THE KING!

MEANWHILE the Mahdi became ill and on the seventh day died. The Khalifa was appointed his successor. He immediately began to rule with the utmost brutality. Day by day Slatin sat humbly at his master's gate, ever under suspicion of being lacking in true loyalty. Occasionally he was spoken to kindly and commanded to dine with his master; at other times, and these were the more frequent, without rhyme or reason Slatin was taken no notice of for days at a time and received only the blackest looks. It was indeed a trying time, but Slatin bore it all with grim determination, thinking only of the day when he might escape.

Months and months of horrible doubt and uncertainty made their impression upon Slatin. He saw his friends one by one tortured and put to death. He was continually wondering when his turn would come. He lived daily on the threshold of the gates of death.

Finally he received word that his friends had almost perfected a scheme for his escape. In June, 1894, some Arabs arrived in Omdurman and prepared to get Slatin away. A station had been prepared in the desert with a change of camels. They instructed Slatin to be ready to fly with them on July 2. But after a trying journey by night to the appointed rendezvous, during which he twisted his foot painfully in the bones of a skeleton lying in a partially uncovered grave, Slatin was forced to limp back to Omdurman bitterly disappointed.

The Arabs, who were to have accompanied him on his flight, had thought better of it and had bolted to safety. Only by pure luck and by feigning illness did his temporary absence pass without comment.

"WE ARE READY!"

ABOUT the middle of January, 1895, a man met Slatin in the street and made him a sign to follow him. He learned that he was an Arab who had been commissioned to rescue him. The man, however, told Slatin that flight was at that moment impossible. Again bitterly discouraged, but not entirely despairing, Slatin was returning to his house when he met an Arab named Mohammed, who told him that he was an agent of the British in Cairo.

"We are ready. The camels are brought and the guides are engaged," he whispered. "The time for your escape is during the moon's last quarter next month. Be ready!"

And without another word or sign he departed on his way.

At last, on the evening of February 19th, Mohammed waited for Slatin at the door of the Mosque. In a hurried whisper he told him all was ready for the flight. They arranged a rendezvous for the following night. The greater part of that evening Slatin spent in a fevered state of excitement. Something seemed to tell him that at last his long-hoped-for escape had become possible. Soon it might be an accomplished fact.

Three hours after sunset the next night, after offering evening prayer with the Khalifa, Slatin rose from his watch outside his master's house and hastened to the road that led to the north. He suddenly heard a low cough, the signal of Mohammed, and stood still. His heart was beating a tumultuous tattoo of mingled joy and fear.

"Lord, grant no failure now!" was his feverishly whispered prayer.

Beside him was a donkey held by Mohammed. Slatin mounted and away they started. The night was dark, the cold northerly wind had driven people into their houses, and everything seemed propitious for the attempt. Without meeting a soul, they reached the end of the town, where a small ruined house stood obliquely to the road, from which a man led forth a saddled camel.

"This is your guide," said Mohammed in a whisper. "His name is Zeki Belal. He will guide you to the riding-camels, which are waiting in concealment in the desert. Make haste. A happy journey and God protect you!"

THE FLIGHT ACROSS THE DESERT

ZEKI sprang into the reclining camel's saddle and Slatin climbed quickly behind him. After an hour's ride they reached the spot where the other camels were hidden among the low-lying trees. All was ready for the escape, and Slatin mounted the camel assigned to him.

They rode in a northerly direction. But progress was slow. Slatin reckoned that they would get at least twelve to fourteen hours' start of any attempt at pursuit. All

that night they drove their camels at their swiftest pace. The country in parts was flat, broken now and then by solitary shrubs, with here and there small hillocks. They rode forward all of the next day without a halt. An hour after sunset they camped in the open country, at about a day's journey from the Nile. They had been riding some twenty-one hours and the camels were nearly exhausted. They had eaten nothing all day and had drunk water but once.

After a brief halt they continued their journey, but the weary animals refused to trot. Toward the afternoon they agreed to make for the Gilif hills, a good day's journey away, where Slatin could remain in hiding until fresh camels could be procured. In the early hours of the next morning they reached the foot of the hills. And here they hid themselves during the day. Fortunately for them, this part of the country was practically uninhabited.

That night Zeki rode on to their friends to get new camels. He promised to return in a week at latest. On the evening of the fifth day Zeki returned with two fresh camels. They quickly mounted and started off in a northeasterly direction across the foothills, which at times were very steep to climb, and by night had reached the plains.

Throughout the night they rode either at a trot or walk across the desert without a halt. By daybreak they had covered half the distance to their relief rendezvous. They ate and drank as they rode. On reaching the Berber road they drove their camels along by heavy application of their whips until they reached Kerraba. This was, perhaps, the most dangerous part of their long journey. Toward evening they saw the Nile in the distance, stretching like a silver streak across the landscape.

While Slatin was left to hide in the desert until the camels could be located, his guide went forward to arrange for the continuance of his escape. But it was found that his flight had become known and it was deemed advisable to delay for a couple of days. Eventually, at midnight on the third day, they continued their journey and, after three days of hard riding across the sandy desert, they arrived at the Groves of Abu Hamed in the Nuranai Hills.

Here Slatin changed his guide for a man

named Hamed Garhosh. That same night they hastened on across the mountains. After a march of a little over two days they reached the Etbai Mountains. Their path took them over bare ridges and stony hills and along a well-nigh impassable road. They never rested, for they dared not. Then Slatin's guide fell ill, and he surrendered his camel to him, marching with bleeding feet for four days beside him.

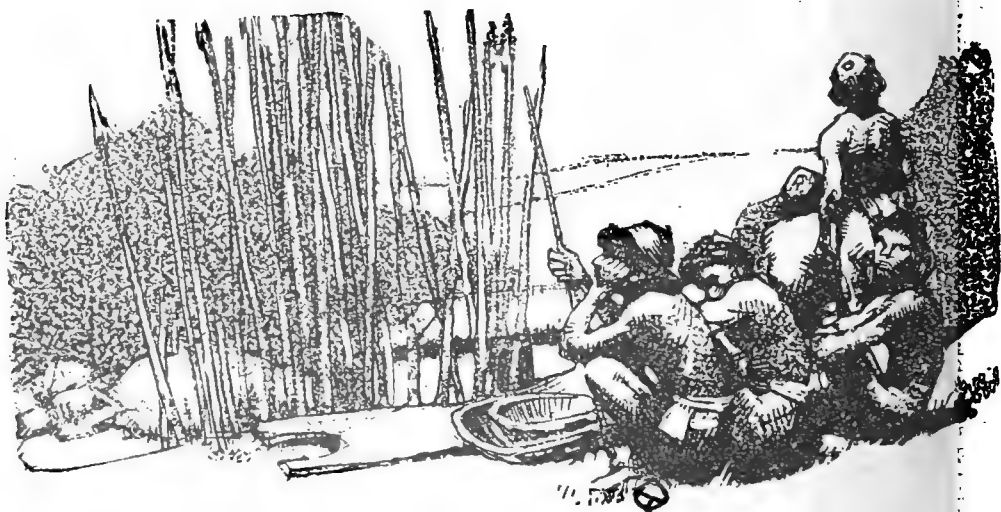
SAVED

AT LAST, on the morning of March 16, 1895, they saw the River Nile and the town of Assouan at their feet! So after innumerable hardships and terrible sufferings, lacking sufficient food and water, Slatin finally reached civilization. He was greeted enthusiastically by the officers of the British garrison and then hastened on to Europe. He was hailed everywhere with joy and congratulations on his release from bondage. Crowned heads vied with one another in doing him honor.

But scarcely had he returned to civilization when he once more offered his services to England and Egypt, and helped considerably, by his knowledge of conditions, toward the success of the final expedition commanded by Lord Kitchener of Khartum. Knowing the Sudan thoroughly, its inhabitants and their language, the strength and weaknesses of the Dervishes, he was naturally invaluable to the great commander who broke the power of Mahdism.

Perhaps one day Slatin Pasha will retire and settle down in his beloved Austria; but we can rest assured that he will leave the Sudan with feelings of great regret, for he has spent practically thirty years of his life there and is part and parcel of its history. The word Sudan is almost synonymous with that of Slatin.

And yet, to look at this little, merry-eyed man, one can scarcely credit that he has gone through so much and lived to tell of it. But then in this little old world of ours wonders never cease. Especially is this the case in the sphere of those adventurous spirits who roam over its face making history and building empires. Slatin has done his share, and more than his share, to help make the Sudan the marvel it is to-day.



THE BRAVERY OF BERTIE McDODD *by* George B. Seitz

IT WAS a night of dreams in Quarlemona; a night of dreams that only you who have been on the further hill and watched the moonlight silver the tower of Sebastian's Gate and tip the sleepy waters of Los Pleaatos with a dreamy, tremulous light can know. A night of dreams that, back in your own land, comes welling up in your memory and fills your soul once more with the *wanderlust*.

It shone now with silver, Los Pleaatos, as it swept on its sleepy way to its gateway in the hills, and up from its banks sounded the chant of its children: Magwa, the crocodile, Saritol, the nightingale, and a thousand others, loathsome and beautiful, great and small.

We lay with our chairs leaned back there at the Major's *hacienda* on the further hill, and drank in silently all this the night poured forth. Far down below, the lights of Chapulta twinkled and winked, and, nearer, the windows of Dom Miguel's shone through the trees. For a half-hour we had sat thus, the Major, the taciturn one, and

myself, each too engrossed in his own dream to break the silence.

Suddenly, sweetly through the night sounded a chord and the clear tones of a serenade. It came from Dom Miguel's *hacienda* below and we listened enraptured, for it was the last perfect touch needed to complete this, our night. But it was not finished. There came an alarmed cry, a loud, harsh laugh, and the sound of a scuffle and blows. Then, as shortly as it had begun, it ended and nothing could be heard but the song of the night itself.

"Well, he got it at last," finally remarked the Major with a short laugh.

"Who?" I queried.

"José, the secretary," the Major answered. "That was he singing. He was serenading Inez, the daughter of old Dom Miguel, and Bosco Franchesca caught him at it. He told him if he caught him he would beat him within an inch of his life, and in all probability he has."

"Oh, yes, I remember," I replied. "Enrico told me about it. Bosco is the toreador, isn't he—the brave one? I saw him yester-

day in the ring. He's a terrible *poseur*, but I couldn't help admiring his bravery. He jumped around and over those bulls as if they were stationary chunks of wood."

The taciturn one leaned forward and knocked his pipe against the edge of the veranda.

"Gosh, you're a fool cub," he remarked. I turned upon him, hurt. I was quite aware of the fact, but there was no need of his remarking it at the present moment.

"Am I?" I demanded peevishly. "Why, just at present?"

"Is this Bosco gentleman afraid of the bulls he jumps around and over like pieces of wood?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why do you call him brave?"

"For that very reason," I said, surprised.

"Humph!" was the reply, and the taciturn one relapsed into silence.

"Well, what's the answer?" I finally inquired after due pause.

"Nothing, except that your remarks quite uphold my first statement," replied the taciturn one and gazed dreamily out over the valley.

But I knew it was coming—the story, and remained silent. Always it was like this. Always he would state my mental incapacity and gaze off into the distance, but then always, if I kept silent long enough, he would unbend and tell the tale. And now it was as usual. Silently he refilled his pipe, silently lighted it, and settled back until it was well under way, then, leaning forward, he spoke.

"There's no bravery in facing a thing you're not afraid of," he said slowly. "To be brave you've got to be abjectly, crawlingly, disgustingly terrified. If it were not so I'd be brave whenever I call you a chump."

"Humph!" I remarked, as he had a moment before.

"It happened up in Lepanto—Bontoc land in North Luzon," he continued, paying no attention to my remark, "where the pleasantest thing a man can do is to die. Ever been there, Major?"

The Major nodded negatively, but did not reply. It was not expected of him. The narrator continued:

LET me see, there was Logan, he who, died in Manila a year ago; Gethrow who's Colonel Gethrow now; myself; and

the poor shrimp whose last name I think was McDodd. Lord, he was an unhandsome creature! His Christian name was Albert, but every one, as soon as they cast eyes on him, called him Bertie. He was without a doubt the biggest coward I ever saw.

He was afraid of almost everything, would jump like a schoolgirl at a common iguana or a yellow lizard, and there sure were enough of such things around to keep him well exercised. But his pet aversion was talee bugs and snakes. Ever see a talee bug? It's a devilish-looking thing. Sort of a cross between a centipede and a Gila monster, with fur all over its back. It's only about half as big as a penny and won't hurt you, but it runs all ways at once, and isn't nice to find in everything you pick up and every dish you eat. They make a soup up there they call talee soup. It's really made of jungle fowl, but by the time you get it it's about filled up with talee bugs that have crawled or dropped in, and they swim around in it like goldfish and play tag from one piece of vegetable to another.

Well, this chap Bertie was a writer, something like you, cub—only better—and evidently had never been away from his valet more than a month in all his life. But he was a wonderfully learned chap. Knew more poets than no one had ever heard of than any chap I ever saw.

We found him out in a jungle trail about forty miles from nowhere, and he sure seemed glad to see us. He'd left Bayombong with a party of Moro bearers that he'd brought 'way up from Mindanao, but they didn't care for North Luzon and bolted at the first sign of an Igorrote, leaving him with no more idea of where to go or how to get there than nothing at all.

I had no official capacity with the column, Logan's K Company, Sixth Regulars, but knew more of that part of the country than any white man around, so trotted along to put in my oar whenever it was needed. We were out after old Allikano and his crew of head-hunters, and I tell you it was no picnic party.

But Logan, though I never had much use for him, was a determined chap and, though they'd led us clear up here into the middle of the jungle, was determined to hang them if it took all year. The going was bad. The rainy season was on, and what with the fever and those hellish little blow-gun darts that would fly out noiselessly from nowhere and

get you in the cheek or hand, life was one long nightmare.

Ever see a man die from a blow-gun dart? Well, you never want to, for it's not a pleasant sight. Usually they stand gazing stupidly at it till the poison begins to work, then their faces puff out and grow black and they drop down, whooping and screaming, and kick until it's over. The only man I ever saw get over a blow-gun wound was a corporal named Rafferty. He happened to be close to Logan when it got him in the hand and, instead of gazing blankly at it as they usually do, he laid his wrist on a root and hollered to Logan to use his saber! Logan did so and the stump finally healed up, but that's the only case I know of.



WHEN things were going like this and every one about hysterical with fever and no sleep, you may know how pleased Logan was to run into a civilian. You know what a fool opinion Logan had of civilians anyway. Well, it seems the moment Logan and Bertie met, they recognized each other. They had known each other back in the States and, if ever a man hated another, Logan hated Bertie.

They'd both been after the same girl, it seems, and Logan had won out, but that didn't seem to make any difference with him, for they hadn't exchanged a dozen words before he started to make Bertie's life even more miserable than it was, and that's saying a good deal. Bertie asked for an escort back to Bayombong, but, of course, that was out of the question. We only had forty men left out of the sixty we started with and couldn't have spared an escort even if Logan wanted to help Bertie—which, he didn't—so Bertie had to tag along.

I must say Bertie put up with his lot without complaint. But that only made me more disgusted with him, for any real man would have stood up on his hind legs and pawed the air if a person snarled and sneered at him as Logan snarled and sneered at Bertie. But Bertie never uttered a word; just followed along, meek and docile, and took everything handed out to him. This seemed to incense Logan all the more, and the things he made Bertie do and put up with went beyond all bounds. Of course the others couldn't help noticing it and began to pick on Bertie too, it was only human nature, and Bertie took it from them the same as he

did from Logan. It was really pitiful.

Although I was utterly disgusted with him, I took his part once or twice when young Gethrow, the lieutenant, following Logan's lead, went beyond all bounds of decency, and, because of that, he rather took a hankering toward me and stayed fairly close to where I was. I saw when first he joined our party that he was a painfully educated and learned person, but that held no weight, for long-haired learning doesn't count for much in the middle of a Philippine jungle.

He even read me a poem one night that he had recently written, and it was truly a real poem. It was an Igorrote woman's song to a jungle stream, and you could actually see the beasties flopping into its gluey bed as it sluggishly flowed along, and smell the dank stench of rotting vegetation, just as it is. I couldn't understand how any man who could feel and write such a thing as this could be the unmitigated shrimp Bertie was, and I told him so.

He didn't flush or grow confused, he was beyond such evidences of red blood, but began to talk and, gradually, as he went on, I began to understand. He was a product of the life he had led; a product of the environment of fogies, pedagogues, and musty books; a man who never knew what real life was, and consequently looked upon us, who didn't scream every time a lizard dropped out of a tree, as little gods—paragons of manhood and might beyond his ken.



IT WAS no wonder, then, with this point of view, he stood for the things he did. Logan was doubly godlike to him, for not only was he a brute of a creature with apparently no nerves, but had won and married the girl, won her by possessing these very qualities Bertie stood in awe of and totally lacked. He told me about her, the girl; how she had sent him away because he was the shrimp he was, and how, when nothing seemed worth while living for, he had determined to come out here and see these real men she pointed out to him. It seemed fate that he should have bumped into the very man whose qualities, more than any other's, had been thrown in his face.

Well, he was learning of these real men, and this red-blooded life he sought to know of, and I tell you his lesson came hard. It was pitiful to see him try to emulate the

example of Logan and stay with the head of the column when they scared up a python. But it was no go. He just had to run, and he reached the end of the line just in time to run into the first real heavy attack we received.

How he managed to come out alive, I don't know, but we found him, when we rallied and charged them, under a pile of boloed privates. To find him unhurt when every one of the others was stark dead seemed more than Logan could stand, and then and there he went off on a tirade against a Providence that would treat real men so and leave such a thing as Bertie alive and unscathed. But he made Bertie pay for living. Made him lug more baggage than a man twice his size ought to have carried, and made him stay up in front where the God-forsaken examples of animal life that only North Luzon can produce were to be seen.

Then, whenever we'd camp, Bertie would become officers' servant and wash pots and pans for Logan, Gethrow, and myself. And I stood for it—simply because I had grown used to it. He'd been with us now for two weeks and I'd become so used to seeing him cursed out by every one, that it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to do such things. Yes, he did even worse than that. He polished Logan's accouterments and cleaned his gun.

But one day I had to interfere. He was bringing up a pannikin of tea for Logan and tripped on a root, whereupon Logan turned and knocked him down. This was going entirely too far. Bertie was a shrimp, but he was, nevertheless, a gentleman, and I couldn't stand by and see him actually man-handled. I told Logan a few definite facts and he didn't do anything like that again, but he still kept Bertie at the same dirty little tasks. I remember asking Bertie later if he didn't have enough spunk to even return a blow.

"I—it would hardly have been wise," he murmured, without looking me in the eye. "He—he is a very powerful man."

"Then, for God's sake," I cried, "why didn't you pick up a gun?"

"And—and shoot him?" he inquired, horrified.

"Any man who wasn't an absolute cringing cur would have!" I shouted, disgusted beyond measure.

"No," he said, shaking his head, "I could

not do a thing like that. Not to him, anyway. I—she is waiting for him to return, back there in Washington, and if he did not, her heart would be broken. No, of all men, nothing must happen to him."

And so saying, he turned and left me, and it wasn't two minutes later before I heard Logan swearing at him again.



WELL, matters progressed in this fashion for about a week longer until, finally, we ran into Allikano's stronghold. We probably never would have found it if he, himself, hadn't led us practically right to it. But he probably thought he had us beaten hands down and was confident that, should we attack him, we would be totally wiped out. And it really looked that way, too.

Of the sixty men we started with, we had just twenty-eight left, and he was behind a picked bamboo fort up a ravine that seemed impregnable. But Logan didn't hesitate for a minute. Making a shield of banyan wood to keep off the blow-gun darts, he himself dynamited a breach for us, and we poured in, hacking and slashing away like fiends. An Igorrote's a bad customer in a bamboo jungle, where he can keep out of sight and blow darts, but that kind of fighting is totally different from standing up to a white man when he's really mad. And we were mad; mad with the remembrance of the puffed, hideous, blackened comrades we'd left behind us, and mad with the knowledge that we had to wipe them out or be left the same way.

Bertie followed in with us, but he had to, for there was nothing else left for him to do. And finally we did wipe them out; wiped them out utterly, for every single man went berserker, and Logan, when he came across Allikano, forgot to spare him for the pleasure of hanging him afterward. Then we burned the village and piled the bodies on the fire, leaving only one hut standing.

We finished the fight about seven o'clock and camped right where we were, dead from exhaustion. Logan took the one lone hut we'd left standing for his quarters and, of course, invited Gethrow and myself to bunk there too. But we couldn't see it. An Igorrote hut didn't appeal to us as much as the street, and we were too fatigued to wait for Bertie to clean it enough to make it habitable. But Logan waited, and the last thing I remember was his voice

raised in fury because Bertie was so slow.

 **HOW** long I had slept, I don't know, but it was past midnight when I was awakened by a terrified scream and, as I started up, I saw a white figure leap out through the door of the hut. Grabbing a gun, I ran toward it and reached it before any of the others. It was Bertie, and he stood on the threshold gazing wildly at something within.

"What is it?" I demanded, stepping up to him.

He did not answer, but pointed, terrified, at Logan, who lay in the middle of the floor, stark and quiet. I could see nothing the matter with him, however, so repeated my question.

"My God! See—his chest!" whispered Bertie, in a choked voice.

I gazed in again, then stepped back myself. There on his chest, quiet, but evidently alert, lay a long, black, string-like thing with a half-moon head.

I don't suppose you've ever heard of a taylo-viper; not many people outside of that part of the country have, for it doesn't grow anywhere else, and that it does not is a god-send to humanity. It's not only its bite that's so bad, though,—Heaven knows, that's bad enough,—but the almost unbelievable quickness of its movements. It's not a formidable reptile to look at either, being only about two feet long and not much bigger round than a man's thumb, but I never knew a person to get within a yard of one and live.

I've seen reptiles in Tibet, Wyoming, and India, and I've never been particularly afraid of them, though some I wouldn't exactly care to handle; but I was afraid now, shamefully so, though half a room separated me from it. I told you a few minutes ago how a man died from a blow-gun wound; he dies the same from the bite of a taylo-viper, only worse, if such a thing can be; though maybe it's not so bad, after all, for it doesn't last as long.

One of the men behind me raised his gun and I stopped him just as he was about to fire, for to shoot the snake meant to shoot Logan too. I realized afterwards that it would have been wiser to let him go ahead, for the shot might not have killed Logan, and if the snake bit him there was no hope

at all. But I did not think of that at the moment. Logan was evidently aware of his peril, too, for his eyes were open. I could see the moonlight glint in them as he winked. But he was wise enough not to move or speak.

It seemed ages that we stood there silently gazing, but in all probability not more than two seconds passed, and it was Bertie who finally broke the silence with a whimpering whisper.

"Surely—surely we can do something," he choked, turning to me.

"What?" I demanded shortly.

"I don't know, but he must not die!" He grasped my arm. "Do you understand? He must not die—she's waiting for him—she—back home!" And he shook my arm frenziedly.



I DREW back and, turning to the man with the gun, was about to tell him to go ahead and shoot, when I felt Bertie move from my side and enter into the hut. Wide-eyed we watched him as he tiptoed in and up to the spot where Logan lay. When he reached him, he hesitated for a moment and turned his face toward us. It was alight—alight with an indescribable something I had never seen and never have seen since, alight with fear and horror, but fear and horror overcome; alight with that which must have shone in the faces of the old martyrs as they went to the stake!

He hesitated only for a moment, however, then, with a sort of whining, eager little cry, threw himself on Logan's prostrate form, rose, and running toward us, hurled the black string-like thing far out over our heads.

For a moment he stood gazing stupidly at the spot where it dropped, then, turning, stepped to me, holding out his arms like a child.

"Tell—tell him I did it for her," he whispered, and staggering, closed his eyes and fell.

THE taciturn one paused and slowly lighted his pipe before he went on.

"And there is the bravery I was talking about," he said; "the bravery of facing a thing you're abjectly, crawlingly, disgustingly afraid of!"



Faces Three

by *Ralph Roeder*

THE train was twenty-four hours out of St. Louis and six beyond that spot where begins the gray-brown, billiard-table landscape which undistinguishes the face of southern Nebraska. Denver was still three hours distant.

Ramlen had already used ice-water as a means of diversion so many times that his supply of sanitary paper drinking-cups was exhausted; he had estimated the dividends that a Railway Moving Picture Car Company, operated along the Pullman idea, would pay, and was thrown upon his last resource—a walk through the train to study the faces of his fellow passengers.

His own car, the parlor-observation, being last, he blundered impartially forward over the suit-cases and sprawled legs of the eight cars, studying the faces as best he could from the backward position.

As he halted at the forward end of the smoker, just two faces stood out in striking memory, two faces worth while. The first, that of a girl in the second Pullman, the car just beyond his own, a girl as trim, marvelously cool and whitely immaculate as though she had that minute stepped over the threshold of a manicure shop; although the punch-marks in the tag stuck over her

seat showed that she had come through from St. Louis.

The other face was a brown, healthy, and likewise extraordinarily imperturbable one belonging to a man in the smoker, a face wherein wonderful poise and calm seemed to be obtained, more through the repose of perfect muscular machinery, however, than by the cool mental alertness which distinguished the girl.

Ramlen placed the man at once as a big-league ball-player or a ranch foreman, just as he had already ticketed the girl as a school-teacher or an actress.

Ramlen started gloomily back through the smoker and glanced as he passed at the brown-faced man. The brown-faced man looked up, with just a bit of query in his eyes, and, grasping at the sudden impulse, Ramlen sat down in the unoccupied half of the seat and proffered a cigar. The man took it very calmly, lit it very calmly and followed Ramlen's conversational start about the monotony of the Nebraska landscape very calmly; in fact, at the end of five lagging minutes, Ramlen had to admit that the man was very calmly stupid. So much for the science of physiognomy as demonstrated in the first example. Would the girl be as great a disappointment?

SEIZING an opportunity to escape, Ramlen resumed his way back through the train to find out. He had reached the forward platform of her car, the second Pullman, and was about to pass into it when he noticed a man standing to one side of the platform and seeming to find intense interest in the rubber siding of the vestibule. Just as Ramlen passed, the man relinquished interest long enough to turn half-way around and reveal the square, brown, imperturbable features of the man Ramlen had left in the smoker a moment before! Now, as Ramlen remembered very distinctly that no one had passed ahead of him as he had walked back, he felt a strange, foolish sense of dreaming.

"How do you do?" he ventured.

"Howdy," returned the man, calmly and with finality.

The voice was that of the man in the smoker and he still had Ramlen's cigar in his mouth, or, at least, a cigar which looked much like it. But it was plain that he desired no further conversation.

Utterly mystified, Ramlen passed on into the Pullman. The girl was still seated there, toward the forward end, as cool, as interesting, as debonair as ever, and she gave Ramlen just the end of a scrutinizing glance as he passed. But he determined first to solve the problem of striking face number one before tackling number two. Proceeding to his own car he had reached his seat and was settling himself when the commotion occurred. There was the sound of a startled cry and of loud voices, rising above the hum of the train. It came from the car just ahead, the girl's car, and, with other passengers, Ramlen hurried into it.

At the forward end, near where the girl had been sitting, a group surrounded an agitated youth whose collar was torn from his shoulders. The conductor had elbowed his way into the crowd and the young man was bewailing to him:

"My name is Parlan, I'm from Riggs, Baggott and Heverling, attorneys in St. Louis. I have just had a lot of valuable papers stolen; they were the exhibits in the big Altange damage suit and were to be used in the depositions which are to be taken in Denver to-morrow. I had them in a packet in my inside coat pocket. A few minutes ago I walked here to the water-cooler to get a drink. While I had the cup to my lips I heard a step behind me, from

the direction of the platform, and the next moment a man's arm reached under my coat and grabbed the packet and then tried to pitch me forward on the floor.

"I grappled with him and prevented him from throwing me, but he got away. I had a good look at his face, however; he was about thirty-five, tall, with a brown, square face and very strong. Why—why, that's him now, right there! The nerve! Catch him!"

Young Parlan pointed with great excitement to a man in a group of passengers from the forward coaches who had just come in, attracted by the hubbub. It was the very calm man of Ramlen's acquaintance, and he was still smoking the cigar.

The conductor and a porter laid hold of him, but he shook them off easily and laughed, lightly and somewhat stupidly. The crowd of passengers who had come with him laughed, too.

"Why, that man has been sitting in the smoker with us during the whole trip!" they declared. "He came along with the crowd when some one said there had been a fight in the second Pullman; he was smoking with us when the trouble occurred."

There were too many to admit of the idea of complicity; besides, people in the day coaches, who were beginning to come in, verified the fact that the accused man had walked through from the smoker with the others several minutes after the noise had been heard and that he had not passed through before that during the trip.



PEOPLE began to look at young Parlan with indulgent smiles. But the youth insisted vehemently that the brown-faced man be held. He grew almost desperate at the suggestion that he might be mistaken.

"Why, it was not more than two minutes ago that I gazed right into that man's face during the struggle! He was not more than four inches from me, I had his image imprinted as clearly upon my memory as a photograph, and that man is he! I demand that he be seized! Those papers were of incalculable value, the whole of that two hundred thousand dollar damage suit depends upon them; they were the letters which the president of the defendant company wrote, and secondary evidence of their contents can not be introduced because the signature is in dispute. I sat up all last,

night with them! Have the man searched!"

"But," pleaded the bewildered conductor, "here are fifty disinterested people, several of whom I personally know, who state absolutely that the man was four cars away at the time the assault happened. You could never convict the man against evidence like that. There is no use in holding him."

Parlan protested and finally, seeing the hopelessness of his position, demanded that, at least, the man be searched.

At the word the brown-faced man began to turn his pockets out upon one of the seats with a calm deliberation and a diversity of contents which brought humor into the situation; he seemed to have everything in his pockets except a package of legal looking papers. He also insisted upon the conductor's carefully feeling over his entire person for anything under his clothes which might resemble the packet.

Ramlen, taking in the strange situation from the edge of the crowd, had long before ceased to pay any attention to the brown-faced man. The preponderance of disinterested witnesses had indisputably proven his alibi. Ramlen's eyes had remained upon one of the half dozen women who were among the spectators—the cool girl. She was now in the back row, but had been in the front when he first arrived. Her face was inscrutable, but one fact indubitably sealed her complicity in Ramlen's mind, she was even cooler now than she had been before the occurrence.

The crowd, laughing and mystified, was scattering to its various cars. The incident seemed ended; everybody went back to their seats, including the brown-faced man and Parlan. The poor youth was almost beside himself. White-faced, he sought his seat and sunk into it hopelessly. After a minute Ramlen slipped in beside him.

"That was pretty tough, old man," he sympathized.

"Tough!" groaned the youth. "It's raw! The case is lost without those letters; the firm would not trust them to the mails, so they sent me with them. It means the end of me in that firm, one of the best in St. Louis, and if you only knew how hard it is to get in a good law firm!"

"I do," remarked Ramlen, smiling. "I am a member of the bar myself."

"You are!" Parlan exclaimed, delighted at the small bond of sympathy. "What do you think I ought to do? Telegraph ahead

for a warrant? He's the man—I am as sure of that as I am that I am breathing. It is bad enough to be done, but to point out the man and be laughed at is maddening! I'll fix him when we get to Denver!" he added vengefully.

"But what you want is not revenge, but the letters," Ramlen observed. "And if you can not locate them on a train of two hundred seated people you won't in a city of two hundred thousand moving ones. Besides, I don't believe he took them."

"What, you too!" cried the outraged youth.

"Never mind," urged Ramlen. "That is really an indication of hope; we may have the ghost of a chance. I am going back to my own car to think the whole thing over and I will be back with my conclusions in half an hour."



RAMLEN arose. But before he went back to his own seat he sauntered past the forward platform of the second Pullman and both platforms of the smoker. There were no ways by which a man could have climbed on the roof and then proceeded forward and returned in the very strange way which the brown-faced man must have employed if he had taken the papers. Moreover, several of the passengers had sworn that he was seated in his own car all of the time.

Returning to the parlor-observation, Ramlen began on the theory which had already presented itself as the only possible one. Clearly there were two men of very similar appearance in the plot, one of whom had got aboard at the last stop and ridden on the bumpers or roof or other unseen place and swung on to the platform of the second Pullman just before Ramlen had surprised him scrutinizing the siding. He had known that the train was nearing Denver and that the time to get the papers was at hand.

Waiting his chance, he had seized Parlan at the water-cooler in the narrow, dark end of the car, got the packet, either kept it or handed it to some one, presumably the girl, and dropped back again, most likely off the train altogether as it was going up a grade at the time. The duplicate brown-faced man had been cleverly added with his impregnable alibi to throw an air of absurdity over the matter and discredit any complaints from Parlan. In pickpocket

terms, he was the "stall," the other man the "wire," and the girl the "get-away."

The train should have been stopped immediately, in the midst of the sage-brush prairie, and searched above and below for the other man. It was too late now; some convenient automobile had picked him up. The game, well worth any expenditure, had evidently been arranged elaborately.

But if there were two men, they could not have been exactly alike. Therein lay the only hope for Parlan. There would be some difference, however slight. The two faces might present identical impressions and yet in detail differ considerably. There was but one way to analyze them—to go over each face, feature by feature, separately, beginning systematically at the forehead and working downward. It was a rare task of concentration, even to Ramlen's legally disciplined mind, and he struggled for twenty minutes, oblivious to everything about him, before he could successfully visualize the forehead of the man in the smoker distinctly from the rest of his calm countenance.

Then it took ten more minutes before the forehead of the other brown-faced man loomed out like a disembodied specimen. But he went on, painfully, down through eyes, noses, mouths and chins—there he stopped with a start! He had an impression, very faint but tenacious, of a small mole or spot on the smoker man's chin; there was none that would evolve upon the other. It was uncertain, but it was all he had to work upon and it would have to do.



HE HAD already mapped out the rest of his plan. The girl in the second Pullman, he was convinced, had the letters; that would be the safest way for the gang to get them to Denver; then both brown-faced men might be caught and the object still gained. Walking into the second Pullman he sat down by the girl's side. She started with a most genuine thrill of surprise.

"This is a very peculiar country along here," Ramlen began with the typical brazen politeness of the railroad masher.

There was no reply.

"Almost as peculiar as Abyssinia. I have been all through that land and the most distinctive feature of their landscape is the frequent embankments that rise in unexpected places. Moles, they call them."

Still no indication that the girl was conscious of his presence. Ramlen paused a moment. Perhaps he was on the wrong track altogether; the girl might be guiltless. He saw visions of himself being thrown from the train as a masher. He resolved to fire his heaviest gun.

"And I have traveled through the Middle West States, too. I have stopped off at the small towns and amused myself by going hunting. There are not many animals left in that region; mostly small ones, rabbits and squirrels and gophers and moles. The ones I enjoyed hunting most were the moles, yes, moles, very peculiar things, moles, and always connected with underground work!"

There was a very slight, barely perceptible twitch of the girl's hands.

"And along the western coast of France and Spain I found that most of the harbor towns had long, low walls of masonry built out into the sea to break the force of the waves; very interesting and useful things; moles, they called them."

The girl's hands moved again.

"Eh, it must be very nice to travel so much," she murmured, very softly.

"Delicious," answered Ramlen. "And now, don't you think you had better give me those papers? You see," he urged, disregarding her gasp of apparently sincere indignation, "that will be so much the easier way. It will all be nicely quiet then and the three of you free instead of extremely quiet and board free—at the expense of the State of Nebraska. I don't believe we had quite crossed the Colorado line when it happened."

The girl had stiffened into complete composure again and her face was set in the rigid lines of outraged modesty.

"I really do not know what you——" she began icily.

"Oh, now, now!" Ramlen continued. "Don't do that. Let's play the game like grown-ups. I had a little talk with his royal calmness in the smoker earlier this afternoon, and I saw that he did not know me; perhaps your crowd imagined that the St. Louis lawyers had let the boy come by himself." He waited for a moment to let the bluff have its effect, then he went on: "It is queer that you did not recognize me; however, you seem to be the brains of the outfit."

"Oh, but I did," the girl lied, led into it by the opening for the one weak spot that

Ramlen had guessed in her—her pride in her cleverness. "But for all that, young man, you are altogether wrong. I am not the one who has the little boy's papers. They are sixty miles away from here, and safe."

She asserted it so blithely and lightly heartedly that Ramlen for the instant felt a tremor at the possibility of her telling the truth. She was safe in doing it; there was no proof to connect her with the plot; and she could deny her admission to Ramlen afterward as easily as she could avow it now.

"Oh, well, we won't play button, button, whose got the papers?" he smiled in return. "The police and the public would be more interested in the subject of the mole."



IT WAS his only weapon and he had to use it overtime. And what an effective weapon it seemed to be! The girl's hands trembled again, slightly but visibly. Ramlen began to feel sure of himself. He possessed a method which was positive if limited. But, even as he rejoiced, the girl recovered her steely poise and laughed another of her care-free, tinkling, schoolgirl laughs.

"You are really quite amusing on the subject of moles."

"Am I? Well, if I told you in detail just how much I knew on that subject you would not consider it amusing!" Ramlen was now feeling absolutely secure in the difference in the two men being marked by the mole on the chin and he let his voice ring with the triumph of conviction. "I know enough," he continued aggressively, "to send the brown-faced duet to 'stir,' and as for you——"

He let the terror of the unspoken speak, narrowing his eyes forebodingly.

"And now, my time is limited. You are the boss of the gang and you are the one to make the decision. I will stand by my word. If you turn over the papers there will be no prosecution whatever. I shall probably report the matter to the Denver police, as a matter of course, but it will end there. Otherwise—well, you know that a prosecution by a firm of lawyers like Riggs, Baggott and Heverling of St. Louis will be a fairly stiff prosecution."

The girl replied coolly:

"And I suppose you know that a defense by such interests as the Altanges will be a fairly stiff defense."

"Possibly," Ramlen returned. "And," he continued, "would assist in giving extra publicity to the brown-faced doubles' game sufficient to forever end its very clever usefulness. You are probably being paid well for this job, but hardly enough to justify permanent retirement."

But Ramlen knew that he was battling on futile ground. They would be paid enough. And he had no evidence upon which to bother them in the least. The girl had quite recovered her delicious poise. She was smiling as Ramlen threatened again:

"I will give you five minutes to decide. I would hardly care to take the papers by force."

"You wouldn't dare to!" laughed the girl, mockingly sure.

And Ramlen knew he would not. She was too clever to fool that way. He was forced again to his only effective point, although he was beginning to feel a sense of childish reiteration in its use.

"While you are deciding you may be interested in hearing further about moles. I am much more interested in moles, myself, than I am in that boy's papers. Cunning things, moles are, so soft and quiet and, in a way, pitiable. Have you ever seen a poor, dead mole calling out for vengeance in every line of its bleeding little body——"

"Stop!" cried the girl.

Her mouth was twitching and her face was dead white. She threw a package into Ramlen's lap.

Picking it up half dazedly, Ramlen noticed on the margins of the papers the official marks, "Exhibit A," "Exhibit B," etc. They were the exhibits, and genuine!

"Eh, thank you," he stammered, much flustered. "Thank you, I will hold to my word." Then, rather at a loss for anything further to say, yet feeling the need of it, he terminated with a very true banality, "I am pleased to have met you. Good-by."

Rising, he hurried down the aisle to where young Parlan, in the lowest depths of gloom, was nursing his sorrow desperately and unseeing. Ramlen pinched him on the shoulder.

"See if these are all right," he requested, pushing the packet at him.

Parlan stared unbelievably, then ecstatically, feverishly. He grabbed the bundle.

"Gosh! Yes! Thanks a million times. You are a wonder! How did you do it?"

It was a rather hard question for Ramlen to answer. He was as yet not quite clear himself as to what had produced his sudden triumph at the end.

"It was easier than I expected," he answered truthfully.



PARLAN murmured more incoherent, extravagant thanks and then Ramlen left him established alertly in the seat with a loaded revolver, borrowed from the conductor. The train was already rushing through the outskirts of Denver and it pulled into the station with Parlan still safe. Ramlen saw him met, as he emerged from the depot, by a tall, wirily made man whom he recognized as the junior partner of a prominent firm of Denver attorneys.

The two climbed into a natty-looking touring-car and whirled up Seventeenth Street. Breathing a sigh of relief, Ramlen started for his own hotel. On the way he stopped off to see the chief of police perfunctorily to report the occurrence. He was shown into the chief's office at once and, after very briefly relating the episode, explained his reason for coming:

"I promised that there would be no prosecution, but I thought that you should be warned that a gang of such dangerous composition was in this part of the country. I suppose they are known to you?"

"Yes, it is Bess Vance and the Thurman brothers. She is the wife of Thatcher Thurman. They are a very troublesome outfit. The two brothers are exactly alike."

"Except for a mole on the chin of one of them," Ramlen corrected. "That is the way I worked on the girl's fear."

The chief looked puzzled.

"But there is no mole on the chin of either of them." He arose and came back shortly with two pictures from a photograph case on the opposite side of the room. "Here they are, aren't they?"

"Yes." Ramlen scrutinized the two clear photographs, unretouched as are all rogues' gallery pictures. "But—but it is queer. Both chins are as smooth and devoid of any mark as a baby's, and yet that ice and steel girl—Vance, did you say her name was?—went clear into a blue funk every time that I spoke about that difference!"

"What difference?"

"Why, the mole."

The chief looked at him keenly.

"Ah, so that was it, a mole! And don't you know the reason why?"

"No," protested Ramlen, wonderingly.

"In 1909 the gang was working at Massillon, Ohio, and Bess Vance killed a young woman, a stenographer. Proof to connect her absolutely with the crime and convict her has always been lacking, but we are nevertheless sure that she did it. A jury in Stark County acquitted her, but the young woman was engaged to be married and her fiancé swore at the time to trail Bess Vance and some time kill her as she had killed the girl. So Bess Vance probably took you for that young man."

"Me? But what——" Ramlen began, puzzled.

"Just a minute!" the chief fumbled among some memoranda attached to the photographs. "You stumbled upon a bigger thing than you realized. That young stenographer's name was Gertrude Mohl!"



DORR'S LUCK



by
Walter
Galt

Billy Blain's Third Fight Ends Un- expectedly

THE chief engineer of the *Diogenes* had been an enthusiastic follower of fights for more years than he could easily remember, and like many another fan he had imagined that the inside details of the fight game were an open book to him. But Billy Blain's fight with Sullivan, his own experience with Geoghan, the fight promoter, and the second fight in which Billy had so signally worsted Terry Tindle, together with the fact that, though ostensibly on the winning side in each event, he had no loose change to show for it, had opened his eyes a bit.

He had begun to realize that there was more in the fight game than he supposed, and that an inexperienced manager or freelance fighting man had about as much chance of succeeding as a layman would have had who tried to keep steam up on the *Diogenes*.

But Terence O'Hanlon was a fighting man himself after a fashion of his own. A difficulty, or a new problem—once he had realized that it really was a problem and not a cut-and-dried question of calculation—was something to get the better of forthwith, and the more difficult it was, the more energy and resource he displayed in tackling it.

He had determined to manage Billy Blain, and consequently there was nobody in the wide world but Billy Blain himself, and no humanly superable obstacle under

the sun, that could prevent him from doing it. Billy seemed satisfied; there was no need to worry on that point; so he set himself to puzzle and ferret out the information and the knowledge of fight tactics that he realized he lacked.

He saw, when he came to look at it in the light of cold reason, how completely Geoghan, who had managed Sullivan and Tindle, had got the better of him. He had paid, like a fool, five hundred good United States dollars to Geoghan to stage the last fight, so that, though Billy had knocked out Tindle, neither he nor O'Hanlon was a cent the richer for it; in fact they were exactly five hundred dollars poorer.

Then, Geoghan had bet him fifteen hundred dollars to a thousand against Billy in a fight with Battling Bill Benson, and the money had been posted. Should the fight come off, as now seemed probable, there was no doubt that the stakeholder would hand over the money in full to whoever won. But would Billy win? If he lost, both he and O'Hanlon would be broke again, and the Skipper, who had risen to the occasion and had staked Billy for a further fifteen hundred with Battling Bill, would lose his money too. If Billy were to win, of course all three of them would be on easy street; but Billy's chance of winning from a man of the caliber of Battling Bill was a decidedly remote one.



THERE was yet another possibility he had to face; he looked at the thing for a while from Geoghan's point of view, and it began to dawn on him that if Geoghan could stop the projected fight he would. Geoghan had made that bet simply and solely as a trap; he had done it in order to coax O'Hanlon to pay him five hundred dollars for the fight with Terry Tindle, and he had never for a moment had any idea of really arranging a match between Billy and Battling Bill.

Now that the Battler had stepped into the breach and arranged the match himself, Geoghan stood to lose fifteen hundred dollars, and although the chance of losing it was small on the face of things, there was always the fact to be considered that Billy had won both fights and might be good to win a third one. Geoghan, it seemed to him, would surely look at it in that way.

Supposing Geoghan managed by hook or crook to have the fight called off, that money would remain in the stakeholder's hands indefinitely, pending a fresh arrangement; Geoghan could stall over making a fresh arrangement just as long as he chose and in the end he would no doubt have some proposition to suggest that had a tail to it; and the tail would surely be a trap for Billy.

So although articles had been signed and sealed for a ten-round fight at the welter-weight limit between Battling Bill Benson and Billy Blain, and although the fight was scheduled to take place as early as the following Wednesday night and he and the Skipper and Billy stood to clean up three thousand dollars or so between them, Chief Engineer O'Hanlon felt uneasy.

One thing he realized at once: he must take the Skipper entirely into his confidence this time, and there must be no more quarreling. They had been in a nasty financial fix when Billy beat Tindle, and the Skipper had come to their assistance like a good sportsman; beyond any doubt whatever he was a good sportsman, and as such a valuable aid to any cause. There would be three in it in future, instead of two.

Another thing that he determined on was to keep off drink; but for his getting drunk Geoghan would never have got the better of him, for Terence O'Hanlon knew perfectly well that when sober he was as clear-headed as any engineer on the Seven Seas. Besides, drink is the most frequent cause of the fighting man's downfall, and he meant to make

a champion of Billy if he could; in order to do that he must set the little man a good example.

He finally determined on a conference, and went up to the Skipper's cabin; the thunder of discharging cargo and the raucous yells of stevedores and the rattle of steam winches made conversation on the deck almost an impossibility, but up in the Skipper's cabin, with the door and windows closed, all was quiet enough and he found the Skipper in a brown study, sitting with his hands deep down in his trousers pockets and staring at the floor in front of him. He too was thinking of the fifteen hundred dollars that he stood to win or lose on Billy Blain.

"A penny for your thoughts!" said O'Hanlon, laughing, and closing the door behind him.

"I'm thinking," said the Skipper, frowning, "that I've made an idiot of myself! It's another case of easy come and easy go! If I'd had any sense at all I'd have stuck to that fifteen hundred dollars I won, instead of risking the whole of it straight away on another fight. It's true what they say about the lure of betting; I just couldn't help myself. But you can take it from me—it's the last time!"

"There's no time to worry along those lines," said the engineer; "if your money's lost, it's lost, and so is mine and Billy's. What we've got to do is to win it if we can, and we've all got to pull together. Let's send for Billy and talk things over."

"Talking won't win the fight," said the Skipper gloomily. "I wish the darned fight could be called off! I'd get my stake back then anyway."

"Yes, and Billy and I would be out fifteen hundred."

"How d'you make that out?"

O'Hanlon told him, while the Skipper listened to him in moody silence, shaking his head from time to time and plainly not in love with the trend of things.

"So ye see," the engineer concluded, "there's only one thing for it: Billy's got to weigh in and win!"

"He's got to if there's to be a fight at all," the Skipper answered; "but I don't mind telling you, Terence, that I'd sooner see the fight called off than almost anything I know."

"Are you going to talk that way to Billy?"

"No," said the Skipper, "I am not! I mean to encourage him—that's only fair. But there are all kinds of slips in this fight business, and I wouldn't be surprised, or sorry either, to see the date canceled for some reason or other."

"Not now, the articles are signed," said O'Hanlon; "they're binding on both parties."

"Bah!" said the Skipper; "there are more ways of getting round prize-fight articles than there are of beating a charter party—and I know more than one way of doing that! You're never certain there'll be a fight until the gong goes for the first round—and not always then!"

"Let's send for Billy," said O'Hanlon; "no good ever came of that kind o' talk yet, and you know it! We've got to all go into this thing with the determination to pull it off and win; then we'll do it! Let's send for Billy and talk fight instead of grouching!"

"Send for him if you like," said the Skipper, as gloomily as ever. "I don't care."

 SO BILLY BLAIN was fetched, grease-smeared and sweating, from the engine-room, and sat on the cabin locker while the two men talked to him.

"How d'you feel, Billy?" asked O'Hanlon, who usually presaged his lectures and examinations that way.

"Fine!" said Billy.

"Think you can stand up to the Battler for ten rounds?"

"Him, or any other bloke o' my own weight!" said Billy, cock-sure and smiling.

"There's a chance you might make a draw of it."

"Don't you believe it!" answered Billy. "He'll win, or I will, unless the referee's been fixed!"

"How d'ye mean?"

"I bin fightin' since almost 'fore I can remember, an' what I know's this: if there's two men in the ring, an' they're both tryin', there's one o' them goin' to be better than the other, an' prove it too—prove it so plain that even a referee what 'ad been fixed couldn't help seein' it. An' if only one o' them's tryin', he's goin' to prove it too. It's only when they're both stallin' that there's any real chance o' the thing bein' called a draw. I won't stall, s'help me Gawd, I won't! An' it stands to reason the Battler won't stall neither—he can't afford to.

There's one of us two goin' to win that mill, you take my word for it!"

"Well, for the love of Mike, let's hope it's you, Billy! We'll be all in bad if you lose!"

"I'll do my best!" said Billy.

"We know that!" said the Skipper; "we know that!"

"But what d'ye know about this Battling Bill?" O'Hanlon asked him.

"Nothin', 'except that he's a bloke wi' two legs an' two arms, an' a head to punch, same as me. I ain't scared of him!"

"Maybe you're not; but it never pays to be overconfident, ye little firebrand! I'll tell ye what I know of him, and what I've heard. He's an all-around-the-ring fighter, with a punch in both mits, and he's clever. They say he fights clean—never lost a fight on a foul yet; but don't forget he's clever, and maybe he fouls without letting it be seen. I saw him fight about two years ago, before he'd got up to where he is now, and I remember he had the most tremendous wallop I ever saw for a man of his size, and he can send it in from almost anywhere. He's quick, too—quick as greased lightning!"

"You bet he's quick!" said Billy; "a feller what wins fights like he's done's got to be quick! So'm I quick! You don't make me scared o' no Battlin' Bill. I liked 'is chivvey too; he's got a decent grin on 'is face, that bloke has, an' I believe he's on the level. It'll be a square fight, an' it's the biggest chance I've had yet; 'f I've got it in me to beat the Battler, you take my word for it, he'll go to the mat for the count nex' Wednesday night; an' if he don't, I do!"

"Ye darned little scorpion!" said the engineer admiringly; "if I had another cent to back ye with, I believe I'd do it!"

"There's no accounting for tastes," said the Skipper, smiling a little grimly, and getting up; "speaking personally, I'd be inclined to hedge. I'm going up to the office, so I'll leave you two here; shut the door, Terence, please, and lock it before you go. So long!"

 THE Skipper had been gone a matter of ten minutes when Geoghan called, and the steward showed him into the cabin where O'Hanlon and Billy were; they received him in uncompromising silence.

"Well, Terence, old sport!" said Geoghan, dropping into the Captain's chair

with easy familiarity, "so you got your match with the Battler after all, eh? 'You didn't deserve to, after the way your man here double-crossed me!"

"Double-cross be ——!" said Billy promptly; "the son of a gun couldn't stand up, let alone lick a man his own size! I stalled and I stalled, till I got durned near tired o' stallin', an' then he took advantage of it an' tried to knock me out; I don't mind bettin' it was you who told him to do it too! First good punch I hit him after that he went to the mat for the count, same as he'll go again if ever I get into a ring with him. I got no use for swine like him, nor you either!"

"Come, come!" said Geoghan, laughing; "that's not polite! I'm not bearing any malice, and I've come here to prove it."

"Prove away!" said Billy.

"Urr-rr-gh!" growled O'Hanlon under his breath; he had had more than enough already of Geoghan's speciousness.

"Well, it's this way: I've an idea you may feel sore about that bet you made with me. It might seem to you as though you'd been tricked into it. You see, you were awfully drunk at the time you made it, Terence."

"I was that!" said the engineer. "I've a notion there was something besides whisky in my glass that night!"

He glared at Geoghan for fully half a minute, but Geoghan did not turn a hair. If he had doped O'Hanlon, he at least had no conscientious qualms about it.

"You mixed 'em, Terence," he answered quite calmly, "and when you mix 'em you get pretty large ideas. No one when he's sober would ever dream that your man Blain could beat the Battler, and now that the bet's made and the match is arranged, you must feel that way about it yourself—you can't help it. You know he can't beat him! Perhaps in a year or two he might, but not yet."

"Go on!" growled the engineer. "What's coming?"

"You stand to lose a thousand dollars to me next Wednesday night, and it's a shame to take the money; its altogether too much like taking candy from a kid. Besides, you and I've been good friends, Terence. I'm not going to let you off altogether, but I feel like giving you a fair run for your money."

"How?"

"Call that fight off with the Battler, and agree to post the money for a fight with another one of my string; I've a man ready and willing to fight Blain here who's not quite in the Battler's class. Blain 'ud have some chance then, and if my man got beaten I'd make my bit out of the gate receipts anyhow."

"I can't call the fight off."

"Why not?"

"Because the Skipper of this ship has put up fifteen hundred forfeit. He'd lose it."

"He'll lose it anyhow! Your man'll get licked sure as eggs aren't alligators, and then where's his fifteen hundred? You'll be doing him no injury, believe me, by calling the thing off. Besides, what business is it of yours whether he loses his coin or not?"

"You listen to me!" said Billy. "The Skipper o' this here ship's backed me for fifteen hundred, an' if I can save it for him, an' win him another fifteen hundred, I'm goin' to do it! He's a good sport, that's what he is, an' you're a swine! This ain't my cabin or I'd kick you out of it!"

"It's not mine either," said O'Hanlon, "but take my tip and get out of it quick, before I throw you out! If the Battler beats Bill, you'll get your money, and not unless; and the Skipper's going to have a run for his! We're on the level in this outfit, and don't you forget it! Now, get out! And don't let me see your ugly face around here again!"

"On the level, are you?" said Geoghan, retreating through the doorway in front of the irate O'Hanlon, who towered above him like a giant and seemed to be itching to get his fingers on him. "You'll be down and under before you're through, or else I know nothing of the fight game! I've heard crooks pull that on-the-level stuff before, and seen 'em get found out too! Well, I've as good as spent that thousand of yours! It's easy money, dead easy. I'll buy myself a bit of jewelry with part of it! So long till Wednesday night, you strictly on-the-level outfit! I'll be there to see the Battler beat the shekels out of you!"

He retreated down the bridge companion, still exuding sarcasm and cynicism, and watching very carefully lest Billy or the engineer should hurl some missile at him; they threw nothing, however, and he reached the pier in safety and disappeared, still smiling his evil, thin-lipped smile.



THE Skipper of the *Diogenes* knew Geoghan well by sight, for he had seen him at the ringside on the occasion of each of Billy's fights, and had moreover heard Billy's abrupt and discourteous refusal of Geoghan's offer to manage him; but he had no speaking acquaintance with him, and he was distinctly taken by surprise when Geoghan buttonholed him as he left the owners' office. He was stand-offish too, for he knew Geoghan's reputation.

"Got a quarter of an hour or so to spare?" asked Geoghan familiarly.

"For what?" asked the Skipper.

"For a little quiet conversation."

"About what?"

"About the match between Battling Bill Benson and your man, Billy Blain. I've a suggestion to make that might prove helpful."

"Well, what is it?"

"Come in here," said Geoghan, leading the way through the side door of a saloon; "come in and sit down; we can talk better over a drink. What'll you have?"

"Lemonade," said the Skipper, and he watched the man who poured it out with a steady gray eye that was trained to the minutest observation, and then drew his glass close up beside him. He knew that O'Hanlon always came home drunker when he had spent an evening with Geoghan than at any other time.

"Have a cigar?"

"No thanks."

"You've backed your man for fifteen hundred, haven't you?" asked Geoghan, seeing the type of man he had to deal with, and adopting with his customary skill the direct tactics that seemed most likely to please his intended victim.

"I have," said the Skipper. "What of it?"

"You're going to lose it, that's all."

"I'm afraid I am, but how does that interest you?"

"It's this way: I'm a fight promoter, as I dare say you know, and I'm always looking for promising novices. Blain's nothing but a novice, but unless I'm mistaken he'll go a long way if he gets into the right hands. As things are, he's going to get beaten badly on Wednesday night; he hasn't a chance to make any kind of showing against Battling Bill, and he'll be a back number from the minute he hits the mat and goes to sleep. The Battler wins all his fights by the knock-

out route, and he wins 'em early in the game as a rule."

"I don't see yet what——"

"Listen. Now if that fight could be called off, I could easily arrange another fight for your man, so that he'd at least have a chance of either winning or else acquitting himself decently, instead of being a mere chopping-block, as he will be, for the Battler. He'd have a chance to fight his way up by gradual stages, making money all the way, instead of finishing his career with his third fight. And, mind you, that's what surely will happen to him if he gets into the ring against the Battler next Wednesday."

"I'd like to see it called off myself, but I don't see how it's to be done. I've posted the money, and unless Blain gets into the ring on Wednesday night I lose it."

"You'll surely lose it if he does get into the ring!" said Geoghan, watching the Skipper's face very narrowly, and pausing for a moment to let the prophecy sink in.

"Well then, if I'm to lose my money any way, what's the use of talking about it?"

"I know Battling Bill pretty well, and I might be able to influence him."

"I heard Battling Bill say he wouldn't have anything to do with you on any terms. He said it after the last fight, when he came into the dressing-room to talk about a match."

"Oh, Bill talks that way, but he don't always mean it. He's a little sore just now over a dispute he and I had a short time ago, but I know how to manage him all right. He'll come round directly I start in to tackle him."

"Well, what's the idea?"

"How much would it be worth to you to have the fight called off? Five hundred?"

"I don't quite understand you. You mean——"

"I mean, supposing I arranged that Battling Bill should call the fight off in consideration of five hundred dollars, and that the balance of your stake—one thousand dollars—should be returned to you, would you be satisfied?"

"I'd have to think that over," said the Skipper cautiously.

"Think quick!" said Geoghan, "there's mighty little time to lose."

"But why should you be so interested in calling the fight off? You stand to win O'Hanlon's thousand, don't you, if the Battler wins?"

"Yes. But what's a mere thousand? I can clean up fifty thousand easily in a year or two if the fight's called off. If I see the Battler and arrange matters the way I've suggested, I shall expect you to use your influence with young Blain to get him to come into my camp and let me manage him. That's where I come in, see?"

"Well, come down with me to the ship, and talk things over with Billy and the chief. They might agree."

"What 'ud be the use of that?" said Geoghan, whom wild horses would not have dragged back to the ship again. "The money's yours, isn't it? Can't you please yourself whether you withdraw your backing or not? What's the chief engineer got to say about what you choose to do with your money?"

"I wouldn't care to do anything about it without consulting both of them," said the Skipper.

"Suit yourself, of course!" said Geoghan. "I can't keep my offer open indefinitely."

"How would to-morrow morning suit you for an answer?"

"Wouldn't suit me at all. I've a chance to see the Battler this afternoon; I sha'n't have time to-morrow. Besides, to-morrow would be too late; there's the club management to be considered—they'd want reasonable notice if the fight's to be called off."

"I'd have to see the others first; I might be able to give you an answer to-night, but not sooner."

"See here," said Geoghan, "how'd it be if I got the thing called off for two-fifty? You'd get twelve-fifty of your money back then, and I guess I can manage it."

"No," said the Skipper, getting suspicious at once; "I'll not do business with you. If you'd made me a straight-out offer and stuck to it, I might have considered it; as it is, the whole thing smells fishy. I don't see at all where you come in over it. I know you haven't acted on the level once with Mr. O'Hanlon, and I don't see any good reason why you should suddenly turn round and do me such an almighty favor. So far as I'm concerned the fight can go ahead. I'd rather lose my money on a straight-up-and-down sporting proposition than save it by some crooked deal with you. You can go to —, Mr. Geoghan, and take your favors with you!"

"Another of these strictly on-the-level

customers!" growled Geoghan, as the Skipper turned his back on him, "the mealy-mouthed pack o' humbugs! They feed me up! Well, I'll bet there's no fight, or if there is a fight Mr. Billy bloody Blain's not going to win it!"

He stayed on in the saloon for half an hour longer, thinking and drinking and smoking and thinking—thinking—thinking. Then he rammed his hat on suddenly, and left in a hurry, as though his mind were at last finally made up and prompt action appeared expedient.



THAT night, as Billy Blain was walking from the engine-room hatchway to the fo'castle, a piece of coal, hurled at him by a stevedore, struck the bulwark close beside him, and splintered into a thousand pieces. Billy turned, saw the man who had thrown it, chased him, overtook him twenty paces from the ship and thrashed him somewhere within half an inch of his cowardly life. O'Hanlon heard the turmoil and the stevedore's yells for mercy, and came running down the gangway to interfere.

"Ye — young fool!" he bellowed, "how many times have I told ye never again to use your fists on a stevedore, or any other kind of Dago for that matter? Have ye no memory at all? Can ye fight the Battler with your fists all bruised? Where's your common sense that ye can't take a belayin' pin to 'em, or a monkey-wrench? Get back aboard at once now, and make sure your fists aren't cut, d'ye hear! As for you," he continued, turning to the prostrate Dago, "take that—and that—and that!"

A shower of well-aimed and terrific kicks assisted the Dago to arise, and a final kick, planted suddenly and with masterly precision on the apex of the Dago's sitting angle lifted him to a good start on his journey homeward. Then O'Hanlon returned, growling and spluttering, to his dinner.

Two hours later, as Billy went up on to the poop to do a twenty-minute spell of bag-punching, another piece of coal came whizzing past him. He turned to discover who had thrown it, when a third piece struck him on the instep, and he fell down writhing, and hugging his injured foot.

"I'll bet that swine Geoghan's at the bottom of this!" swore O'Hanlon, bending over him. "Are ye hurt much, sonny?"

"Nothing's broke," said Billy, feeling

the injured instep carefully; "it's swellin' now, though."

"We've got to get that right by Wednesday, sonny!"

"You bet we will!" said Billy.

"Maybe it was the Battler did it, and not Geoghan after all," suggested the engineer, driving his thumb deep down into the growing lump to feel for breakages.

"Ouch! Think I'm a lump o' dough, or what? Steady wi' them there lobster-claws o' yours, will yer! No, I don't guess it's the Battler. He's too cock-sure for one thing, an' wouldn't take the trouble. Besides, he don't seem to me like the kind o' cove as 'ud do that. It's more likely Geoghan. I'll be right as rain, though, by Wednesday night, whoever did it!"

"Lord, sonny! This is tough luck!"

"It sure is!" said Billy, "an' the ——— thing 'urts like ———, too!"

"It'll hurt ye more before I'm through with you, if you're to be fit to stand up by Wednesday!"

"Go ahead!" said Billy. "Help yourself! I'm game!"

III

 THEY took Billy to the fight-hall in a cab on the following Wednesday night, he and the Skipper and O'Hanlon sitting inside, and the steward sitting on the box-seat with the driver. The steward had strict orders to keep his weather eye lifting, and the two men inside sat almost on top of Billy to prevent him from being hit by any other missiles before he reached the hall. The Skipper and the chief were pale, and obviously nervous, but Billy seemed cheerful enough and just as confident as ever; he limped, though, when he reached the hall, and his foot evidently pained him a little still.

Battling Bill Benson saw him coming and walked into his dressing-room to have a talk with him, for there was half an hour yet before the fight.

"What's this, kid, about your having hurt your foot?" asked the Battler.

"Aw, Nothin' much!" said Billy. "Got hit with a piece o' coal, that's all."

"Well, see here, kid, you've no call to fight to-night if you don't feel like it. Keep your forfeit up and fight me a week later—it's all one to me. I can beat you, fit or not, and I'd sooner see you have a fair show for

your money. I'll tell the managers to hand out rain-checks."

"I knew you was on the level!" answered Billy. "Thanks, though, I'd rather fight to-night. I'm fit enough."

"Suit yourself," said the Battler. "Remember this, though: I'm out to win! I'll spare you nothin' for your injured foot. A guy can't come this compassion business over me an' get away with the fight on the strength of it! I'll pepper you on your weak side all I know how!"

"You'd be a fool not to!" answered Billy. "I'm goin' to see if I can't establish a good-sized welt on your map, an' keep on pepperin' that to get even! It's all right! Battler, an' I tell yer it's darned decent of yer—I understand. But I'll fight, thanks, You wade in and do your worst—I'm goin' to win!"

"Gee! You've got a nerve!"

"I've got a punch, too! Wait till you feel it!"

"All right!" said the Battler, laughing.

"Care to see me weigh?"

"Come on," said Billy, "we may as well both weigh, and get it over."

They were both about two pounds under the limit, and both of them in the absolute pink of condition, each of them a mass of knotted muscle writhing up and down beneath a satin skin, and, barring Billy's injured instep, they seemed about as evenly matched as any two men could be.

"See you in the ring, then," said the Battler. "You're getting ten per cent. of the gate for your share, aren't you? Good for you—it's a big house to-night—you'll clean up about five hundred to set off against what your friends 'll lose!"

"Lose nothing!" answered Billy. "You'll see us draw down three thousand five hundred when this thing's over!"

"I'll let you go three rounds just for your pluck!" said the Battler, grinning and turning away toward his dressing-room.

"I wonder if the Battler meant that?" said Billy to O'Hanlon a minute later, as the engineer gave him instep a little final attention. "He said he'd let me go three rounds, darn his impudence! If I last three rounds, I've a notion I'll win the fight!"

"I don't know how to advise you, sonny, I'm sure. It's a tough proposition you're up against."

"Don't you give me none o' your advice; I don't want it. You leave the scrappin'

part to me. Your job's managin'. I ain't goin' to make no plans; I'm goin' in to fight just how it seems I ought to when I get there. Ten rounds ain't long enough, though, for a fight o' this sort—you've not more than found out what the other man's style is than the fight's all over!"

"Ten rounds is plenty long enough for a man with a foot like yours!" said the engineer. "It won't last you five rounds unless you nurse it!"

"We'll see," said Billy. "I've been 'urt worse than that in my time. You mark my words; this is goin' to be a real fight!"



BILLY'S words came true. It was the finest fight the fans had ever seen in that gymnasium. There was an electric atmosphere that thrilled the whole building from the moment that the two combatants clambered through the ropes at opposite ends of the ring. The Battler was well known to the fans already; he had almost formed a habit of winning fights, and he won them by straight, clean tactics that made him popular. On the other hand, many of the fans had seen Billy win his battle the week before, and those who had not had read the newspaper accounts of it, so the hall was packed from end to end with enthusiastic lovers of the game, and they greeted both men with an uproar of applause.

The Skipper and O'Hanlon were both in Billy's corner this time, and the steward was there again with the bottle and the bucket, but he had no one else to support him. Billy seemed confident enough, and there was a glint in his eye that told of unconquerable courage, but the other three felt lonely when they saw the crowd that clustered behind the Battler in the corner opposite; he seemed to have almost every boxer of note in New York backing him. Geoghan sat in the front row on Billy's right with a grim smile on his face—a sinister smile that hinted at something diabolical known only to himself.

Little time was wasted in preliminaries, for both men meant business and were eager to get it over. They were standing toe to toe in the center of the ring and grinning at each other under the fierce glare of the electric lights, less than three minutes after their appearance.

"Three rounds I'll let yer go!" declared

the Battler teasingly, "then you're IT!"

"Don't you be so darned cock-sure!" said Billy, grinning back.

There came a hush of tense expectation through the hall, then "TIME!" and they were at it.

It was a whirlwind fight from start to finish, with the spectators standing on the seats and being shouted down again, and O'Hanlon and the Skipper holding on to the edge of the platform in agonies of apprehension. Billy seemed to have forgotten that his foot was hurt; he sprang at the Battler and landed first with his favorite left-right-left to the jaw and body, drawing blood and covering before the Battler had time to answer.

The attack had the immediate effect, though, of stinging his opponent to do his utmost, and he waded in with his crouching, savage slugs to the stomach that had brought him within two places of a championship. Billy dodged them and side-stepped them, and every now and then countered them; he was all on edge, springing gnat-like from side to side, and every second or so, as the Battler lunged past him with one of his furious drives, Billy's glove landed with a snap behind his ear or on his ribs. Once, toward the finish of the round, the Battler overreached himself and tripped. Billy was on him like a flash of lightning and sent him to the mat amid yells and thunders of applause.

"Do that again, d'ye hear!" yelled O'Hanlon, and the whole house heard it, for his voice could carry above the thunder of a storm-tossed engine-room. The crowd took it up, and yelled "Do it again!" until the roof rocked with it. The Battler got to his feet leisurely, and walked to his corner at the call of time, apparently little the worse for wear except that his mouth bled a little. It was Billy's round distinctly, but he limped quite noticeably as he walked back to his seat.

"Durn ye, ye little runt! Ye'll win!" said the engineer excitedly.

"Shut up!" said Billy, "an' 'tend to my foot, will yer!"

So O'Hanlon got down on his knees and felt the instep; it was swelling badly, but there was little he could do to it in the minute that he had at his disposal; he chafed it between his hands to keep it from stiffening and Billy declared that the attention had done it good, but it kept on swelling

visibly, and Billy limped worse than ever when the gong went.

O'Hanlon and the Skipper leaned against the platform, holding each other's shoulders absent-mindedly and breathing through clenched teeth, and Geoghan at the ring-side grinned more openly. The Battler's seconds had seen what was the matter too, and had not failed to post him. He grinned as he rushed across the ring and, true to his word, he devoted himself to taking full advantage of Billy's handicap.

 THE second was a round of rushing tactics on the Battler's part. He bored in savagely with the sole purpose of making Billy use his feet. He rammed and hustled him on to his injured foot whenever possible, never forgetting to slug with all the steam at his command, but concentrating none the less on Billy's weakness. And since Billy dared not clinch, for fear that his injured instep would get trodden on, he had to stand up to the Battler and slug back again, blocking blows instead of dodging them.

The Battler's tactics had the disadvantage that they left him frequently uncovered as he swung his terrific punches home, and Billy took prompt advantage of every opening. There was a snap to his blows, too, that made them audible above the thunder of the crowd, and where they hit they hurt; but the Battler had far and away the best of it; he could spring back when he chose to—and he chose to frequently, for Billy's right to the ribs was no love-token—and he could rush in like a holocaust from whichever side he chose, with two firm feet to give his punches weight.

He had Billy's head swinging backward twice before the round closed, but suddenly, just before the gong went, Billy seemed to forget that foot of his again; he ducked one tremendous swing, side-stepped a second, and then crossed his right to the Battler's jaw with a thwack that sent him reeling. The Battler recovered and closed up like a clam, but Billy sprang in and rattled him and kept him rattled till the gong went, opening up the cut on his lip again and ending the round with a drive home to the stomach that sounded and looked as though it had reached the Battler's back-bone.

"Foul!" yelled Geoghan, jumping up.

"Foul!" shouted one of the Battler's seconds.

"No foul!" said the referee, and the crowd cheered.

It had been a rip-roaring round without a single clinch, and the crowd was satisfied.

"Can ye hang on eight more rounds and make a draw of it?" asked the engineer, handing up the bottle, and sponging Billy's chest where big red blotches were beginning to glow and spread.

"Can that!" said Billy. "Rub my foot again!"

So O'Hanlon rubbed it, while the Skipper used the sponge and the steward flapped the towel furiously, and Geoghan at the ringside grinned.

"Time!" said the referee, and Billy limped once more to the middle of the ring, where the Battler stood still and waited for him.

"This is yer third and last round!" grinned the Battler from between cut lips.

Billy wasted no time or breath in answering him, but led off lightly with his left. The Battler guarded it, and for a moment the two sparred for an opening. It was arm-work, all of it, for Billy's injured foot was growing worse and worse, and he stood almost still, with his toe barely resting on the ground. The Battler seemed content simply to play with him.

Then suddenly the Battler crouched, and Billy covered up. The Battler let loose one of his terrific body punches and Billy tried to side-step it; the blow caught him too far above the heart to do much damage, but he stepped hard on his injured foot, and winced and staggered, and a follow-up blow that landed on his ribs sent him tumbling with a sort of corkscrew motion to the mat.

"Stand back!" said the referee. "One—Two—Three—Billy rose on one knee, and rested there. The Battler mistook that for a sign of weakness. "Four—Five—Six—" Billy raised his right glove to his face and rubbed his eyes as though he were feeling dazed, and the Battler got ready to send home the blow that would finish him. "Seven—" Billy rose slowly to his feet, and the Battler rushed in and swung for him—his old favorite crouching stomach punch that had the disadvantage of leaving so much of him uncovered.

And suddenly, like a steel spring, Billy straightened. He stood firm on his injured foot, and his left shot out and met the on-rushing Battler's jaw with the combined force of the whole weight and strength of

both of them. It brought the Battler all standing to his heels, and made his hands drop, and Billy's right landed again on the same spot twice in quick succession!

The house yelled; the Battler rocked for a second on his heels; and Billy, with a final effort, sent home a stomach punch that sounded like a cannon going off. The Battler shut his eyes, and sat down backward on the floor, and rolled on his side and stayed there while the referee counted ten as slowly as he dared and the fans howled "Oh, you Billy Blain!"

"He's out!" said the referee, and the most astonished man in all that gymnasium was Billy. He could barely walk back to his corner. His foot had swelled so enor-

mously that he could scarcely move it, and the pain of it was hardly bearable. His apparent faintness had been nothing but a trick to take the Battler off his guard, and his rally he knew was his last. It was one of those lucky desperate final efforts that happen sometimes to make the weaker man a winner.

"What'll I say to ye, ye little varmint?" asked O'Hanlon, picking him up in his gigantic arms and starting to carry him to the dressing-room.

"Say nothing!" answered Billy. "That was luck. He ought to ha' won that fight! Let the steward tend to me; you chaps go an' get the money! That was real dorg's luck, that was!"

Pride OF Race

by
J. Ulrich Giesy



AT SIX O'CLOCK the doctor set his helmet over his curly brown hair and started across to the hospital.

The sun still flamed red in the sky. Off to the left the sullen flood of the Congo rolled majestically by. As John Danton climbed the wooden stairs to the house of sickness, he heard the voice of a black boy singing monotonously at his work.

At the head of the stairs Danton paused and surveyed the scene—just an ordinary British outpost in the advance of white civi-

lization among a benighted and bestial race. Officers' quarters, a diminutive barracks, and some provision houses and trade stores lay beneath his gaze. Upon a tall staff the colors drooped limply in the humid air.

Instinctively his hand came up to a salute. Those bars of red and blue and white always affected him like that. It wasn't the colors, but what they stood for—the symbolization of land and family and race.

The Boer war had brought Danton, a Canadian offshoot of the old parent British stock, to Africa. The military branch of

his profession had taken a great hold upon him, and after the fracas was ended he had sought and found attachment to the Medical Corps. He was less fortunate with the Corps itself. To them he was an outsider, a provincial; he did not belong. Still, by good work he held his place, until Fate and a superior departmental power buried him in the African wilderness.

It was not what he wanted, or expected, but it was orders. He assumed his station and took up his tasks. Fever had smitten the post—such fever as he had never seen before; yet with the optimism of youth he had grappled with it and fought it and seen men die. Gradually his optimism died too. The fight narrowed to where it went grimly on—a death struggle, dominated by the bulldog tenacity of Danton's race.

He had asked and been granted a nurse. Not a man, but a girl, fresh from a training-school. Danton cursed when she got off the boat; then smiled and paraphrased an old poem: "Mine not to reason why. Mine but to do—and die—maybe."

The double-roofed hospital, built upon wooden pilings to elevate it from the damp ground, was full. Why blacks living in close association with whites seemed more susceptible to contagion puzzled Danton, even though the fact remained. Blacks and whites both lay within the sheet-iron walls, worked over by Eleanor Martin, who was proving a competent nurse.

Danton sighed as he stood looking at the post, shimmering in the heat. Brown haired, brown eyed, sweated to a trim leanness of muscle, his face was worried and harassed. He turned at the shuffling step of a native orderly, who approached the spot where he stood.

"What for you live?" he asked sharply in the pidgin of the West Coast.

"I live for tellum come inside," said the negro. "Missie Martin, she say one fellow boy go out — quick, all same she know."

Danton sighed again, turned and entered the building, following his guide. His tread woke echoes in the room. Faces of suffering, black and white, turned at the sound. At length he paused at the bed of a giant negro, whose face wore the strange gray pallor of the moribund of his race. Under the thin sheet the outlines of his great limbs lay like the trunks of fallen trees and the massive torso showed plainly in the shaded light. The bony fingers picked idly at the

sheet. Terror of the unknown lurked in his eyes. Beside him a black boy, naked save for a narrow breech-clout, listlessly fanned away the flies. Miss Martin came hurrying up.

"He's dying, I think," she said, her eyes on the physician's face.

Danton nodded.

"Nothing to do," he replied, and turned to the squatting boy. "You live for fan um flies," he commanded. "Byemby, little time, him fellow go out. You fan um flies good!"

The black nodded sullenly.

Danton wiped his brow.

"Lord, this is awful, Miss Martin," he said slowly. "How are our boys to-night?"

The girl's face looked tired and drawn as she answered.

"They don't seem to get any better," she said. "Smith's hemorrhages keep up. Danley's temperature is one hundred and six right now, and that poor little McGower has been raving for his mother again. Oh, Doctor, can't you think of anything more I can do?"

The rage of defeat swept over the man's face at the words.

"If you obey orders, it will be plenty, Miss Martin."

His own futility showed in his accents, making them harsh.

The woman shrank as though he had raised a hand.

"I beg pardon, Doctor," she said. "I didn't mean to advise. Only it makes me heartsick to see our boys lying here dying in this awful place. Sometimes I wonder what it is all for."

She ceased and raised a hand to her throat.

Danton seized her by the arm and led her across the room. At a window he paused and pointed to the limp flag.

"Look," he said softly. "It's for that. Just to keep that there. That's what they're here for—you and I. That's what they're dying for; what hundreds of brave men have died for through hundreds of years, and will die for. For that, and to show the world that, once planted, it stays!"

A weird wailing rose up and filled the room. Danton turned quickly.

"Hear the cub howling," he said grimly, pointing to the mourning fan boy. "A king of the jungle is dead. Better call the

orderlies, Miss Martin, and get that dead thing out. Lord, if this goes on, I wonder where we'll bring up! Two-thirds of the post's down now, and I'm afraid Jones is taking it, too. Lieutenant Goring is strained to the breaking point. To-morrow I'll try and induce him to send for help."



EVERY night for a week he had said almost the same words. Each morning Goring decided to hold on another day. Yet to the casual observer the strain they were under would not have appeared. With that peculiar characteristic of the English, which has led them through untold hardships to conquest far and wide, these men kept themselves up to code. They bathed and shaved and dressed, kept their tunics buttoned, their boots clean, their side-arms bright. After Miss Martin arrived they even began a sort of dressing for the evening's meal. And when one lives in a steaming jungle, far from any others of one's race, surrounded by primitive naked manhood, it means something to do things like this. Now the girl added her voice to the doctor's unrest:

"Don't delay any longer, Doctor. Please try and persuade Mr. Goring. Doctor, I'm afraid."

"You are a woman—of course," the man answered shortly.

The woman eyed him for a moment closely.

"I have a better reason than that," she said. "Ever since we've been so sorely stricken I've noticed an unrest among the blacks. They're just animals, after all, Doctor, with no other emotions than those of self. If we grow so weak that they need not fear us, they will rise!"

Danton pondered her words for a moment.

"They've tried it before, and what happened ought to have taught them a lesson," he said at last.

"But they don't think of the past or the future. The whole thing is the present, with them."

"Well—maybe," said the physician. "Anyway, I'll talk to Goring."

He replaced his helmet, turned and stalked away.

As he descended the gallery stairs an incoming orderly jostled against him, whether by accident or design he did not know. His fist crashed into the man's grinning

features and hurled him to the ground.

"You wanta live for be careful," rasped the white man. "You see um white man you step alla time one side. Maybe no, you no live for long."

He swung away, rubbing the knuckles of his hand. It wasn't much, but it made him think. For days as the fever laid hold upon one after another of the garrison, he had noticed a rising insolence in the blacks.

What if the blacks should rise? What of the sick, and the girl at their mercy? He shook himself and half laughed. What need of fear? The whites had always dominated, always would. The fears in the souls of these sons of darkness would keep them down. Yet suppose? Always his thoughts stopped there. He shuddered. What of the girl? They might not even kill her! God! what a pair of fools he and Goring were!

There had never really been any woman in Danton's life. Now? Well, he almost fancied that there might be—that there was.

"Lord!" he muttered to himself, "but that's a funny thing! The girl's a little bit of all right! And sometimes, when I've been feeling peckish, like to-day, I've treated her like the deuce. I'll make that bleating ass of a Goring take action, now. Why couldn't they have sent me a man instead of Nellie? And yet—" With a slow grin: "By Jove! I don't know that I wish they had."

Goring wanted to hold on for a day or two. Danton had his way. At dawn a boat went down the river for relief. Jones went to the hospital. There remained Goring, Danton and eleven men.



THAT day Danton saw with a growing unrest that the post was filling with blacks from the surrounding bush. He told himself that it was nothing, that it had happened dozens of times before; but ever came the thought that they were not short-handed then as now. To make matters worse, Goring went around with an undue color and a line of white about his full-lipped mouth. Once or twice Danton saw him shiver, and once he caught him taking a peg of brandy, and jerked the glass away.

"None of that, lieutenant," he commanded sharply. "Go over and lie down on your cot." He slipped a thermometer

under the officer's tongue. It registered one hundred and three. Danton sighed with a catch in his breath, "I guess you've got it, Dan," he said as lightly as possible. "Report to Miss Martin. I'll be over pretty soon."

"I'll see you in.—first!" responded the other loudly. "I'm all right, only, b-r-r-r, I'm cold as the deuce."

"You're sick, Dan," said the physician. "Let me take charge for a few days, old chap. You go get into bed."

Goring sat up and buttoned his tunic with fingers that shook.

"When I'm out, Danton, not before. My God, Jack, look at the post! I'm afraid I waited too long to send for help. I've got to stay on my feet—we've all got to. We may have to fight. If I do keel over, you can stick me in your hospital, but not one bloody minute before!"

"Well, go over and let Miss Martin give you some dope, and lie down till you're over your chill."

"Right," said Goring. "I'll go over and look the place over a bit. If it comes to a fight, we may have to use your 'krank-house' for a fort, old chap. Lord, if it wasn't for your sick 'uns, Jacky, I'd be tempted to fall back on the post below."

"Rot!" exclaimed the physician. "We must simply keep up an appearance of confidence and we'll be all right. If they ever see that we're in a funk, why, it's good-by. Now go over and tell Miss Martin to give you a pill."

Later Danton himself went over to look after his work. Half-way to the hospital, under the full glare of the sun, he felt a sensation of cold. It passed momentarily, and he went on and entered the house of sickness, to be greeted by a burst of song. It was Goring, sprawled upon a cot, full in the grip of the fever, and delirious as well:

"Then stand to your glasses steady,

So here's to the dead already:

Hurrah for the next who dies!"

Danton went over and laid his hand upon the man's forehead. It was hot and damp with sweat.

"He's been like that for a half-hour," said Miss Martin. "Oh, Doctor, what are we going to do?"

"Fight!" snarled Danton grimly. "That's what we're here for, Eleanor." It was the first time he had ever used her name openly, and in his harassment it

seemed very good, some way, to steady his self-control. Apparently she did not notice.

"I've been giving the usual treatment," she told him. "Is there anything else?"

"No," responded Danton, "not that I know of. I wish to God there was!"

"Eleanor," said Danton—openly now—"I'm going over to the barracks; I'll get back as soon as I can. Don't worry, and keep cold cloths on Dan's head, if he'll let 'em stay."

He went out and made his way to the barracks, pushing boldly among the scowling blacks. When he arrived he examined the men and gave silent thanks that none of them showed signs of falling sick. He made an inspection of the arms and ordered all guns and ammunition taken to the hospital at once.

"Mustn't let the blacks get the guns," he reflected, "so I'll fix that right now."

Heavily laden, the twelve men set off to the hospital, dragging a small machine gun along. Sullenly the blacks gave way before them, closing in behind with murmurs of guttural muttering, yet held from overt action by a still lingering fear of the whites. When the arms were safe in the hospital, Danton sent the men back.

"A cool front will hold the fiends for hours," he told Miss Martin, "and hours count now," and set to work placing the quick-fire so as to sweep the gallery stair.

Goring was coming out of his fever, and lay weak and panting on his cot.

"Poor old chap," muttered the physician. "What if I should be the next myself? Oh, Lord, I can't be. I got to keep up. I guess I'd better dope up a bit."

He walked to the drug-room and took thirty grains of quinine at a dose.



NIGHT settled over the jungle, broken only by the muttering of the blacks, the howl of a jackal, and the babblings of the sick. Danton was for going to his quarters, but finally yielded to Eleanor's pleading that he remain with her.

"After all, what can it matter?" he said wearily, and flung himself into a canvas stretcher chair.

But the blacks made no move in the night. It takes some time for even such creatures to forget the teachings that had belched from the rifles of the Empire from time to time. Only one incident broke the watches of the night.

Midnight had passed. Eleanor slept in her chair. Even the delirious had sunk into a restless, dissatisfying sleep, when Danton heard a sound. On tiptoe he started to see what it might be. That it was not in the main room he felt sure, and crept softly to the drug-room door.

Twomba, one of the orderlies, was filling the little gelatine capsules used in giving the quinine to the sick. Seated at a table, with his back to the door, he was working with manifest haste. Such industry looked suspicious to Danton. He crossed to the man's side.

"What for you live?" he asked.

Twomba glanced up and then down.

"I live for fillum med'cine," he sullenly replied.

Danton's eyes narrowed. Something in the color of the powdered drug on the slab seemed wrong to his trained eye. Suspicion awoke with a gasp.

"What for medicine you alla time fillum, you fella?" he demanded, touching a moistened finger to the pile of powder and carrying it to his tongue. And then suspicion died and certainty was born. His hand flew to his hip and his lips drew back in a snarl. "You ———, that's not quinine, that's morphine! You——"

Catlike, the black leaped backward, reaching for a heavy glass jar on a shelf, his features distorted into a mask of murderous hate.

Without hesitation Danton drew his service revolver and shot him through the body before he could seize and hurl the jar.

Choking and gasping, coughing mouthfuls of bloody foam, the negro collapsed. Eleanor came running to the door. Danton replaced his weapon in its holster and met her with a grim smile.

"You were right. It's lucky I stayed. He was putting morphine into the capsules, and I caught him," he explained, nodding at the writhing thing on the floor.

Lights flashed out in the barracks. Danton called across that everything was all right. The blacks muttered and turned again to sleep. Goring slept fitfully, tossing from side to side. Danton made Eleanor go back to her chair and try to sleep again. He lighted a pipe and smoked, crouched over in his chair.

In the morning Goring insisted upon taking charge. His first act was to quarter the men from the barracks on the hospital

veranda, in the face of all Danton could say.

"We've got to be prepared," was his sole argument; and while admitting that he had grounds for his act, Danton feared its effect upon the blacks. It would show them how weak were the whites.

"It's the judgment of a sick brain," he told Miss Martin, "but, good Lord, what can I do?"

That afternoon the blacks broke into a storehouse and looted it. Goring, cursing futilely, did nothing save pace the gallery, defying Danton to keep him quiet and talking wildly of their plight. He was in a panic, and gradually his demoralization spread to the men. They shuffled nervously and fingered their weapons, casting anxious glances toward the river from time to time.

Danton, walking about the veranda, seeking by a joking sentence, a cheerful word, to stay the growing unrest, found himself clinging to a pillar, shaking beyond any power of his to control, with Eleanor's arm about his waist.

"Doctor," the girl faltered, "Doctor, are you ill?"

"I'm cold," he said dully. "It'll pass. Yesterday about this time I had a chill."

Lips pale, wide-eyed, the girl motioned to a soldier, and together they assisted Danton to the hospital and inside.

"Sixty grains," he told her, overruling her manifest hesitation. "Eleanor, I must stay on my feet; it's kill or cure."

Six capsules lay in her palm when she returned from the drug-room. He swallowed them one by one.

 WHEN the blacks found the casks of spirits and began struggling about the opened kegs, Goring knew it was the beginning of the end and became livid at the thought of what must come.

"It's no use trying to stick," he said. "It's just plain throwing our lives away. I'm going to take the launch, and you and Miss Martin and all the men that can travel—we can take sixteen or seventeen at a pinch—and drop down the river till we meet relief. I've been hoping all day, but it's no use—not a bit—not the least in the world!"

An expression of horrible uncertainty grew in Eleanor Martin's eyes. She gazed upon the man as though asking herself if this cringing creature could indeed be the man she had come to know and admire in

the weeks she had been at the post; could it be he who stood wiping a pallid forehead with a shaking hand, pale fear looking out of his eyes?

"But what of our sick, Lieutenant Goring?" she faltered at length, seeking to arouse him to a sense of his duty, giving him his last chance to be a man.

"They'll simply have to stay," said Goring. "The ones who are able can go along. The rest will have to stay!"

Danton rose shakily from his chair, faced his former friend, put his hand upon his arm.

"Brace up, Dan," he said. "You're sick, but try and remember that you are a commissioned officer of the British Line. They sent us here to hold England's advantage. Why, old chap, we've got to stick!"

Goring shook off the other's hand with an impatient gesture and replied in a torrent of words.

"Don't talk rot!" he cried. "Sentiment is all right in a story, but this is life. Sticking's all right, too, but we can't do any good. Why try to hold this rotten post? A gunboat can take it back in twenty minutes any day. What's the use of wasting fourteen lives on a matter of patriotic sentiment? Take your hand off my arm, Danton! I command this fever hole, God help me, and I'll have no interference from you!"

"We won't argue about who's commanding officer," said Danton. "You're of the Line, I of the Medical Corps. But I want to appeal to you as man to man. Look the thing in the face for a minute, Dan. You're going to run before a shot has been fired. You call my argument patriotic sentiment, and you're right. Patriotic sentiment's the thing that makes nations grow. It doesn't matter where a soldier falls; his country puts him there and rests securely because she feels that, come what may, he'll stay."

"What's one little post, Dan? Just one link in a chain, and the chain isn't any stronger than its weakest link. What if one link breaks? It isn't you talking, Dan; it's the fever and the sleepless nights of late. Look at the flag out there. Are you going to leave it without one shot to defend it, boy? And the sick? We're duty bound to stand by them. Suppose we are beaten; suppose we die, what of that? What are fourteen lives or fourteen hundred, when weighed against patriotic sentiment, faithfulness to duty, pride of race?"

"You talk like a fanatic," sneered Gor-

ing, as he turned to the door and snapped out a sudden command: "Fall in!"

Danton followed him to the door as the men dressed their rank and stood to attention.

"Whatever you do, Dan, I stay with my sick," said he.

"And I," added Eleanor Martin, placing herself at his side.

"You're a pair of fools!" Pale as death, Goring turned from them and strode back into the room. "Men," he addressed the sick in their cots, "the post is overrun. I've sent for relief and it hasn't come. Now I'm going to drop down the river. Any of you who want can come along."

Followed incredulous silence while the truth sank into their comprehension. Then a babel of men's voices broke the quiet of the room. High above the rest rose the shrill pipe of a cockney private:

"My hye, boys, the leftenant's goin' to run awye. The blighter's got into a funk!"

Goring turned, cursing, but Danton held up his hand.

"Men," he began in level accents, "Lieutenant Goring deems it impossible to hold this post. Some of you are able to sit in the launch. Any such may go. As for me, I shall stay with such of you as are left. We have plenty of weapons and ammunition and if attacked I shall expect every man who can hold a gun to get up and fight. That's why they sent us here. 'England expects every man to do his duty,' was what Nelson said at Trafalgar, and she expects it just the same to-day."

Silence save for the breathing of men under nervous tension, then a grizzled sergeant raised himself, swung his gaunt legs over the side of his cot to the floor.

"Gimme me pants an' a rifle. 'Ere's where the Hold Girl gets w'at she hexpects!"

Up and down the line of cots burst forth a feeble cheer.

"You're all sentiment mad," raved Goring. He turned to the nurse who stood silent. "Miss Martin, get ready to leave."

Eleanor shook her head. Her eyes were full of tears.

"I stay at my post," she said steadily, and turned away.

Outside, the men standing in line shuffled restlessly. Goring turned toward them, paused, turned back.

"Any of you coming?" he asked sharply.

No one answered. He passed out.

Danton looked at the girl.

"Eleanor, please go," he said.

"I stay," said the woman hoarsely.

"Eleanor, I command you!"

She smiled wanly.

"I refuse to obey. If we get out alive and you wish, you may have me dismissed."

"But they—they may not kill *you*!"

"I shall take Twomba's suggestion," she answered. "They say morphine is an easy way."

Danton put out his hand to her frankly, as man to man, admiration in his eyes.

"You're worthy to be the mother of Britons," he said, his voice muffled with feeling, and turned away, shaken by a chill.

Outside, the gallery rang to the pound of marching feet. Eleanor hurried to a window and leaned out.

"Good-by, boys," she cried bravely. "If you meet the steamer, come back."

Understanding dawned upon the blacks. The garrison was withdrawing. Only the sick in the hospital remained. Jostling, muttering, they pressed upon the little band, held off by the flashing bayonets, howling and brandishing their weapons, working themselves into a frenzy of attack. A stray spear or two flickered through the air and were answered by little jets of flame. The howling increased, the spears thickened and became a flight. Fighting and backing, the little contingent reached the launch.

Danton turned back from watching.

"Nothing can stop them now," he told Eleanor. "They've smelled blood. We must do what we can to get ready. Get the men's clothes and I'll pass out the arms."

II



TOGETHER they worked, doling out clothing and cartridges, laying a rifle beside each man. While they worked, the exhaust of the launch grew fainter and died, the noise of the blacks grew louder, came toward them, a babble of guttural sound.

"Drag a chair out beside the Maxim," Danton requested Miss Martin, "and pile the ammunition on the floor. I'll work the gun. You take charge inside."

Routing the sick out of bed, they piled the mattresses and blankets along the walls.

"Cotton mattresses ought to stop the bullets from any guns they've got," said Danton; "we don't need to fear the spears.

But, oh, what a garrison! It's enough to make one laugh."

Almost, one could excuse the doctor. Pallid, unshaven, with hollow, fever-staring eyes, clad in nightshirts and trousers, or shirts alone, it was a motley array. Little McGower even essayed a bit of a Highland fling, his hairy calves twinkling grotesquely below the skirt of his shirt.

"Man, man," he laughed feebly, stopping to pant from the effort, "would ye look at the kilt I'm wearin' th' now!"

Eleanor Martin put her arms about him, and forced him to sit down.

"Save your strength, Donald," she cautioned. "We'll need it all."

"My hye!" wailed the little cockney. "'Ere's a rum go. Some one has gone an' give me your pants, sergeant, an' me only five foot four!"

"Button 'em under yer blödomin' chin, then," growled the sergeant, pushing cartridges into his gun.

Eleanor laughed from pure nervousness.

"Oh, you boys are splendid!" she cried boldly. "I'm proud of every one of you. I'm proud of our race!"

"Put out the lights!" said Danton sharply. "They're coming now."

Darkness fell on the room. Each man gripped his weapon and waited with slow-drawn breath. Danton stole out to the Maxim and slipped a band of cartridges into place. He glanced into the room, where Eleanor's uniform made a spot of gray in the gloom. She was brave. He thought of what he had told her—worthy to be the mother of Britons. He was right. Such women were the founts from which brave men issued. If they got out alive, he would ask her to be the mother of his sons. If? What a cur Goring had proved!

The black mass was nearer, blacker than the night. Torches twinkled above it, lighting up scowling faces, distorted by primitive passions—the love of battle, looting, the lust to kill. A vast murmur rose from it in heavy crescendo, like the beat of an angry sea. So it swept onward, dark, sinister, terrible, a very monster of the night.

Danton raised his eyes. A night breeze was sweeping above the trees, and there against the stars he saw the flag, its folds flung out in the air of the night of terror, and it waked new hope in his heart. "England expects every man to do his duty!" England—secure through faith in her sons.

A spear rattled on the wall and fell slithering to the gallery. The black mass was still nearer. Danton depressed the gun's muzzle and calmly pressed the release. With a whirring cough, the little weapon spoke. A heap of writhing bodies began to form in front of the stairs. At the same time a sense of dreadful power swept through Danton's soul. Back and forth he swung the muzzle of the Maxim. A spasm of sickness and nervous tension shook him like a leaf. With pounding pulses he jerked out the exhausted band and slipped a fresh one in. What a glorious power was his! He could sit here and kill and kill!

Out of the mob rose a dreadful wailing. The mass of blacks wavered and paused. Without seeing, Danton sensed Eleanor by his side.

"See 'em wiggle," he cried, pointing to the row of bodies; "like worms back home, after a storm."

The girl's cool hand fell on his burning forehead.

"Don't talk like that. It's awful. Oh, Jack—don't shoot any more!"

Dully he glanced up.

"Hullo, Eleanor," he said thickly. "Say, this beats shooting back home. What did you say? Oh, yes—maybe you're right."

The mass drew off toward the side of the building. Danton pointed.

"Work for your Tommies," he said.

Spears rattled on the walls of the building, came through the windows, fell into the room. They began throwing flaming brands, in an endeavor to ignite the grass thatch of the inner roof. Stabs of flame burst from the windows as the men knelt and fired into the attacking mass. Now and then a bullet from some native's trade gun tore through the thin walls, setting the air a-hum. An acrid smell of powder grew in the still air and set Eleanor to coughing, as she doled out coffee and cognac to her men. Little McGower, leaning from a window for a better aim, was transfixed by a spear. Eleanor took his head in her lap and cuddled him like a child to her breast, as he gasped and straightened and died.



TO DANTON'S fevered senses everything became unreal, a dread nightmare, from which he could not wake, in which was the howling, the *snap*, *snap* of the rifles, and Eleanor sitting with the head of the dead boy in her lap. Then

it cleared. The attack ceased for a brief interval, and they took stock of their own injuries in the lull.

The blacks fired the storehouses and barracks and renewed the attack. Under cover of this, a party crept round and tried to rush the stairs, but the quick-fire drove them back. Aided by the light of the fires, they concentrated their endeavors on firing the roof. The air grew full of flaring fiery trails. It became evident to all that sooner or later some brand must reach its mark and set fire to the tinder-dry thatch of the inner roof. Danton called the grizzled sergeant and left the Maxim in his charge. He sought out Eleanor.

"To-night will settle it one way or the other," he told her; "so we don't need to save water. Soak up a lot of blankets, Eleanor—make them good and wet—while I hunt up a hammer and nails and some string. I'll help you carry them to a window in the rear. I'm going up on the roof and fix things a bit. They can't fire the outer roof, it's iron, but if the inner one catches, its going to be no end of a fix."

"But you can't get up there, Jack," protested Eleanor, clenching her hands in the dark.

"I can if I have to," said Danton. "Go get the blankets, quick!"

The girl moved slowly away and Danton lit a candle and rummaged out the tools he needed, adding a heavy bottle from one of the shelves. He helped carry the blankets back to a window, then unwound a length of string, and thrusting the ball into a pocket, turned to the girl.

"I'll climb a pillar to the roof," he explained, "then I'll pull the cord as a signal. You tie on a blanket, and I'll draw it up. Then I'll tie on the bottle and swing the string back to you. Leave the bottle alone, and send the blanket up. Be careful about exposing yourself. A curtain of wet wool will put an end to this game, I think."

The girl nodded, then caught his hand.

"Be careful. Promise me to be careful," she whispered, choked, and, stooping, began to tie a blanket to the string.

Danton slipped through the window and, aided by the shadow of the wall, reached a pillar, raised himself unnoticed, and began to climb. Up and up he dragged himself, panting. Now the firelight caught him, and a yell told him he was seen. Still he climbed up and up, caught the edge of the roof,

dragged himself once more up and over, and fell gasping on the grass-covered roof. For a moment he lay fighting the weakness of his fever, then he gave the line a twitch. On the instant the jerk was answered, and hand over hand he drew the first blanket up. Then he sent the line down again to where Eleanor crouched. When the last one was sent him, he took his hammer and began to nail them to the rafters supporting the outer roof.

Renewed yelling told him that he was plainly perceived. Spears, rocks and occasional bullets began to come his way. Hidden behind the blankets he worked on. His fever was rising in leaps and bounds. The blood pounded in his ears. The din of the conflict below him, the *thud, thud* of his hammer, close to his ears, all merged into one general nightmare of suffering through which he struggled on.

Spears drove in about him, even pierced the blankets he held in his hands. A sudden outburst of rifle-fire below him told him Eleanor was trying to cover his work, and he smiled at the thought of the girl. At length he began half consciously to sing. Crawling about the eaves of the grass roof, hot, dizzy, drenched in sweat, "Rule Britannia," burst from his lips.

The sound of battle ceased. Superstitious awe seized the blacks. What manner of man was it who defied their weapons and sang strange songs of the white men while crawling about a roof?

The last nail was driven. Singing, John Danton slipped down the pillar to Eleanor Martin, who seized him in her arms and, shaken by sobs, dragged him inside.



DESULTORY firing now came from the front. Some little head seemed to have developed to the attack, and they concentrated the fire of their few rifles against the old sergeant, who knelt beside the rapid-fire. A berserk rage swept again over Danton. Despite Eleanor's pleadings, he went out and almost roughly pushed the kneeling sergeant aside. Even as he seated himself behind the Maxim, he could feel his fever pounding in his temples in heavy strokes of pain. He was tired. He wanted to rest, and these fiends insisted upon keeping up a noise.

Well, he'd show them—he'd show them. He laughed. He knew that he was delirious, and he laughed. He began singing again,

and turned the Maxim full upon the howling mass of blacks. It was no shadowy target now. The flames of the burning quarters pricked out the individual figures, shone on grotesque ornamentation and shining naked bodies gone frantic with the fray. Singing, Danton slipped in a band of cartridges and began to turn the crank of the gun, moving the muzzle to and fro. Like the ripples of wind on water the wave of destruction struck the horde.

Danton laughed and went on with his singing, swinging the gun's muzzle in time to the rhythm of his song. When the band was run out, he rose, swayed, and staggered back from the gun. He wanted to show Eleanor what great work he had done, but no—Eleanor didn't approve. Well, he'd lie down—he'd—

Consciousness returned to a dull pounding and bumping beneath him. Starting upright, he found himself on a cot, with Eleanor beside him.

"What's up?" The words sounded queer, even to himself.

"Lie down, dear," said the girl. "We've done all we could. This is the beginning of the end. They're chopping the piles out from under the building, and we can't reach them to make them stop."

Even as she spoke there came a grinding crash. One corner of the building sagged, with a groaning and creaking of timbers, checked, and held.

Danton put out his hand and groped for the girl's fingers, found them and held them fast. All at once his mind seemed unified, made whole again.

"Eleanor," he said quite calmly, "Eleanor, this, then, is to be the end? I'm sorry, dear. Dear, brave little woman, I'm sorry—for you. We all tried to do our best." He paused and sat silent, listening to the chopping and pounding from below.

Now and then one of the men fired downward. They had ripped some boards out of the floor and took turns firing at the blacks below. Lost in the gloom of the room, the man and woman sat and watched and listened, her fingers still clasped in his palm.

"If we'd got out of this," Danton resumed speaking, "I meant to ask you to be my wife, but at least I want you to know that I love you before we go. There never has been any other woman, Eleanor. You're the first, dear, as you will be the last. I'm

afraid I've sometimes been—not kind—in the past. I didn't know what you meant to me then—only now! So it all comes to this at last, little girl. I love you, Eleanor Martin, and I want you to know!"

Another piling gave way. The girl kept fast hold of his hand.

"I too," she whispered. "I too. Oh, Jack, dear, when you went up on the roof it was almost more than I had the courage to endure! I loved you so. And Jack, Jack, before we go, I want to confess something to you. You stayed here from a sense of duty, love of country, and all that. Jack—poor little I stayed—out of love—for you!"

She slipped to her knees beside the cot. Danton's arm crept about her shoulders. Her head lay upon his breast. Some way their lips found each other's and met and clung. The building sagged now in the center, but neither man nor woman gave any sign.

"My Gawd!" shrilled the little cockney. "Why don't hour Tommies come?" He sat on the floor, holding his smoking rifle, and burst into tears. "My hye! Hit's too bloomin' hawful. Done hup by a lot o' niggers! Ho, I wisht I could see me mother, Hi do!"

Danton's arm pressed the kneeling girl more closely.

"Eleanor, dear, when we drop—it won't be long now, they'll end us men of course. But you—they may not kill you, dear; they may let you live. But, Eleanor, I think it would be better not to live—that way. You spoke of Twomba—the morphine!" He paused.

"I know, Jack," she said, stirring slightly. "I am prepared, dear; it is in my pocket now."

The building shook and trembled now under each blow struck at its wooden piles. Back in the room the grizzled sergeant laid down his heated rifle and spoke to his men.

"Well, blyme, hit's been a good fight we cripples has put up. When we settles down, us chaps sticks together, you understand, an' fights her out. Onct I heered tell habout a ship what went down with hall 'ands singin' that song, th' doctor was singin' a bit ago. This 'ere horspital ain't no bloomin' wessel, but you Tommies come hup 'ere, by me, an' let's sing 'er now."

They crawled to him, and one by one in

the darkness they took up the bars of the song in quavering accents, which some way grew stronger as they sang.

Eleanor Martin gave a great sob. Her fingers fumbled in her pocket and came forth holding the little oblongs of white. Slowly she turned them over on her little palm.

"This is the swan song—the end! This, Jack, dear—is good-by!"

Danton sat up, put out his hand and took the capsules from her.

"From me," he said hoarsely. "Not yourself." Then he paused, leaned forward, every line of his figure tense. "Silence!" His voice rang through the room.



AND it came. What, save for the singing, they must have heard—the panting exhaust of a steamer as she made her way up stream! Danton heard it, Eleanor heard it. The men heard it, and held their breath. A vague murmur, some way different, holding a sense of apprehension in it, rose from the blacks. They heard it too.

Out on the river a sudden, long flame stabbed the dark. Something which sounded like a great bee came whirring and drooning shoreward and burst near the burning buildings in a mass of orange flame! Shell followed shell, and then a volley of sheeted flame from the infantry on the steamer's deck, as she swung in to the shore.

The blacks drew together, drew back. Like a monster of the night they crept to the edge of the jungle and into its gloom. Murmuring in heavy gutturals, each passed, like a creature of the jungle, slinking, snarling to his lair. Hard on their rear the staccato bark of Danton's Maxim hurled defiance at their heels.

Captain Knight at the head of the landing party, came leaping up the stairs to the hospital gallery and paused.

The figure beside the little quick-fire rose to meet him, drew itself rigidly erect, brought its hand to correct salute, opened its mouth to speak—and swayed forward, even before uttering the first word.

Knight caught the reeling form as it lunged toward him, picked it up, and bore John Danton through the door of the hospital, to deliver him, quite as a matter of course, to Eleanor Martin—nurse.

Petticoated Highwaymen



by
Thaddeus
S. Dayton

HISTORY has immortalized the exploits of the highwaymen who were the terror of the roads of England two or three centuries ago. It is well-nigh silent concerning the deeds of the ladies of the road who were their contemporaries in crime. There were only a few of these women of the highway, but they were among the most picturesque figures of that adventurous age.

Some were of dazzling beauty; all were bold to the point of audacity. Masked and booted and spurred, armed with sword and pistol, they robbed travelers along the Great North Road and the other highways leading to London Town. Their feats of daring equaled any of the achievements of Jack Sheppard, Dick Turpin, Claude Duval or Captain Dudley. Their ways were as masculine as their dress, and those of them who were finally hanged at Tyburn died as carelessly as they had lived.

MOLL CUTPURSE—HIGHWAYWOMAN

AMONG these ladies of the road, Moll Cutpurse was especially remarkable. She so excelled in every branch of dishonesty that her name is a thievish synonym

to this day. Long purses were worn at the girdle at that time, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. While a mere girl Moll became such an expert at cutting purses and filching their contents that the sobriquet she then earned clung to her always. Her real name is unknown.

One of her exploits at this stage of her career was the talk of London. One evening a nobleman in the fringe of a crowd missed his watch. Thinking he had lost it accidentally, he asked Miss Molly, who was standing near, to help him find it. She led him on for nearly half an hour. She talked so earnestly and seemed so interested and helpful that the nobleman never suspected her. Moll had his timepiece all the while. Finally his lordship, being late for his rendezvous, had to hurry away. As he was departing, he promised her twenty guineas if she found his watch. Thereupon she handed it over with one hand and collected the gold with the other!

Miss Molly did not stay long in that branch of the profession, however. Before she was twenty she was a night-rider, stopping travelers on Hampstead Heath and the London roads and by mere mastery stripping them of their valuables. Single-

handed she held up many a stage-coach.

She could sit a horse as gallantly and ride as tirelessly as any man that ever wore a mask and called out, "Stand and deliver!" She made more money than any of the looting cavaliers of her time. Not one of them was her equal in daring. They doffed their plumed hats to her as a token of professional respect. All her brief biographies say that she had "a long and successful career on the highway."

Mistress Moll, lady of the road, strangely enough, is all but forgotten now. Perhaps it is because her end was not dramatic. She lived to the good old age of seventy-four and died in her own bed. Yet her dying had some curious incidents about it, almost enough to make a story in themselves.

Despite the huge sums of money that she had gained by her exploits on the highway, Old Moll died poor. She was not actually impoverished and was by no means in want, but she was poor for a woman who on one occasion had bought her release from jail at the price of about ten thousand dollars. Dashing Moll was usually very successful in getting away with the fruits of her robberies, but she saw the inside of prison a good many times. Yet she never was convicted. Always when she was tried before the assizes the witnesses against her had strange lapses of memory. Expenses like these, which were necessary and frequent items of her romantic and gay profession, brought her close to the end of her resources when she was well past seventy. Her source of income was cut off, for she was so afflicted with a dropsy that she could no longer mount a horse. Rheumatism had crippled her nimble fingers so that there was no more cutting of purses for her. Her day was over. She had five hundred dollars left when she took to her bed for the last time.

Moll was nothing if not original. She would leave no legacies; she wished no marble tomb as a memorial. There were many friends, however, whom she wished to remember. The form that her gifts took was gloves. She spent full half her fortune for these, and distributed them among all her friends and acquaintances. She presented fifty dollars each to her three maids, "requesting them to make good use of it that it might procure them husbands." Then, saying she had been "rather singular during her life," she directed that she be buried face downward.

MR. AND MRS. BRACEY OF THE KING'S HIGHWAY

FOR a man and wife to become highwaymen in partnership is an unusual chapter of romance even for the veriest of swashbuckling days. Yet this is the story of Joan Bracey, who lived her brief life in the saddle and became a gay and capable robber-woman upon the London Road simply because she had become enamored of a dashing and very successful highwayman.

Joan was the pretty daughter of a wealthy English farmer. Under other circumstances probably she would have wedded a rich man of that or a neighboring county and bred up a race of stalwart British statesmen. But she met by chance the handsome Edward Bracey. He posed as a gentleman from London, but in reality he had come "up country" to recuperate after a strenuous series of robberies and hairbreadth escapes.

Bracey was so splendidly mounted, so grandly clothed, his jewels—a few days before the property of the nobility—so fine, and his pockets so well lined that the farmer's daughter completely lost her head. The highwayman wanted her because she had a pretty face, a delightful figure and a dashing spirit. He was a shrewd criminal, and must have seen at first glance the hold that a life of adventure would have over the girl.

She never disappointed him. She took to the road like a duck to water, just as the briskest young fellow would. First of all, she assisted her highwayman to rob her own father of a considerable sum of money and then ran off with her bold lover. The pair proved very successful financially. Joan did not attempt to make herself like a man. She went quite to the other extreme. It was an experience never to be forgotten for a stage-coach full of passengers to be held up by a pair like this: The husband's pistols would menace the trembling travelers, while his wife's soft fingers would go through their pockets nimbly and her bright eyes would dance by the lantern's light.

Some men might have had courage and resource enough to resist Bracey's dashing orders, but they were made helpless by his charming companion, who cut such a captivating figure on her steed and who knew so well how to extract the last shilling

and the last jewel from their hiding-places.

Joan's career, however, was short. What she and her husband had taking on the road amounted to a considerable sum of money. The hue and cry was after them more than once, but they continued in the active practise of their trade. One day, however, Joan met her fate. She robbed a person of quality—a Justice of the King's Court—who was relentless in having her sought out.

She had bad fortune and was identified. English law was sharp, short, quick and merciless then. The hempen rope was always ready for the guilty. Joan Bracey was tried, convicted and went to the gallows before she was twenty-one. Her execution was one of the great events of the day, for in her career was the strangest mingling of youth, love, crime and swift punishment. Her husband was hanged less than a year later.

THE WOMAN WHO CURSED HER EXECUTIONER

THERE is another highway bride in the annals of forgotten felonies. She was not a dazzling beauty. Her name was Anne Holland, and she always rode at her husband's side on their midnight forays. Her history is a rather plodding, drab-colored one compared with Joan Bracey's, but it shows an equally interesting phase of life in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The story of Anne's early life is not recorded. She was born in a slum of London and was first heard of as a barmaid in a very ordinary public house—she was not very young then. She must have been a determined character, for she married an elderly comb-maker who had taken her fancy. It was so unsuccessful a union that her husband at last, in self-defense, had to turn her out of doors. At that particular moment—just as it would happen in a play—her highwayman appeared.

He was a good journeyman robber named James Wilson. He never became one of the great footpads, nor did he rise to even moderate distinction in his profession. The gentlemen and ladies of London Town never told each other excited stories about him or discussed him at their routs. But they had much to say of sturdy Anne Holland.

Anne grew to be a familiar figure at Newgate Prison. Her wedded life lasted about two years. Then Wilson was hanged for his many crimes. But Anne Holland still continued robbing on the highroads. She carried off much property of value and was regarded generally as a female demon, for she thought nothing of shooting down those who resisted her in the dead of night. She wore men's clothes easily and soon had forgotten the feel of petticoats. Her experience and audacity helped her out of many a tight place, and more than one of her daring exploits have been credited to her more famous competitors.

"We have no further account of her," says her biographer, "until 1705, when she was executed at Tyburn. Instead of imploring mercy for the pardon of her offenses, she execrated the hard heart of her judge, the rigor of the laws, and abused the executioner; forgetting to repent of the guilt which brought her to this disgraceful end, and would, unrepented of, deliver her soul into the far less merciful hands of another hereafter."

THE WIFE WHO TRAINED HER HUSBAND

THERE, too, is Moll Jones, who is one of the most curious figures in these dusty pages of days long gone by. Moll Jones does not figure so much in the annals of the great as in those of the picturesque. She was married when she adopted the road as a profession. No one ever taught her how to become a highwayman. She studied it all out and taught herself. After she had perfected herself in the art of robbing travelers, she disclosed her doings to her husband. She trained him also. He was a butcher, and it is recorded that he had "a very tender heart."

The butcher proved an apt scholar, though. He became a good, capable road man, and Moll and he collected many a gold-piece and many a jewel. His wife, however, wearied of the enforced periods of inaction which were necessary now and then, owing to the activity of the constables and to other reasons. If she had stuck steadfastly to the road her career might have been longer and less dramatic in its conclusion. A London-bred girl, she saw too many opportunities of petty pilfering near at hand when there was no chance of wild rides on moonless nights.

One such robbery that she attempted is told of in a collection of anecdotes about her. She went out one night, leaving her butcher husband peacefully drinking in a pot-house near at hand. They had decided that it would be unsafe to saddle their horses and steal out of London for a raid. She chafed at the inaction and decided that there must be thievish possibilities quite near home. She found one quickly. The door of a handsome house stood open—it looked like an admirable opportunity.

"She went up-stairs, entered a bed-chamber, and hid herself under the bed," says the ancient chronicler of her crimes. "In about an hour a couple of footmen brought in candles, while the maid with great alacrity laid the cloth. The table was furnished with two or three dishes, and five or six people sat down to supper, besides children. Poor Moll trembled for fear and knew not how to conduct herself. There was a dog in the room, who snarled and quarreled with the cat about every bone.

"To silence their clamor, and to prevent their quarreling, one of the servants threw a fire-shovel at the animals, which wounded Moll in the face. The cat rushed out below the bed, but the dog continued to snarl, and nothing would pacify him. Accordingly one of the servants threw a fork at him, which gave Moll another scar. Supper at last being ended, and all withdrawing, Moll escaped without detection, taking the sheets of the bed with her, as a small recompense for the pain she had undergone."

The fate of her husband is not known. Moll was hanged at Tyburn. She was only thirty when she died.

A TITLED LADY OF THE ROAD

ONE of the most dashing of these ladies of the road was a lady of title. Her rank and her real name are not disclosed. In fact, all that is known of her is what she related to another highwayman whom she attempted to rob and who vanquished her.

A highwayman out on the road one night met, as he supposed, a gentleman of wealth and fashion. Much to the highwayman's surprise, however, the gentleman spurred toward him, leveled a pistol at his head and told him to "Stand and deliver." The first highwayman was much taken aback and begged the stranger to have patience and he would surrender all his property. Catch-

ing his assailant off his guard, the first robber, with practised skill, whipped out his pistol and fired.

"If you are for sport," the other cried, "you shall have it!" and instantly shot him in the thigh.

In the *mêlée* that followed both brought their swords into play, and the first highwayman finally disarmed the other and threw him to the ground. Thereupon he had a second surprise. It was neither a gentleman of fashion nor a footpad with whom he had been fighting. It was a woman, young, beautiful and of a distinguished air! After some persuasion she induced the real highwayman to accompany her to a house some miles distant. It proved to be an elegant mansion, and there, over a bottle of wine, she told him her story.

She had learned fencing and sword-play early, and had practised it with her husband, whom she had married at the age of fifteen. Her husband was *penurious*, though passing rich. Being stinted in her cash and leading a comfortless and unexciting life generally, she took the resolution of "borrowing a purse" occasionally as a means of mitigating all her trouble.

"I judged this resolution safe enough," she said, "if I were not detected in the very act; for who could suspect me to be a robber, wearing abroad man's apparel, but, at home, that suitable to my sex? Besides, no one could procure better information, or had more frequent opportunities than myself. My husband's guests made no secret of the sums they carried. Then, too, one of our old servants keeps the inn in the village. This woman is a great gossip, and frequently boasts of the rich booty of those that lodge there.

"Having thus resolved, I soon provided myself with the necessary habiliments for my scheme, carried it into immediate execution, and continued with great success, never having failed till now.

"Instead of riding to market, or traveling five or six miles about some piece of business—the usual pretenses with which I blinded my husband—I would, when out of sight, take the road to the house where we now are, where I changed my clothes, and proceeded to the road in search of prey. Not long since my husband had a hundred pounds due to him. He appointed a certain day for receiving it at a place about twenty miles away. Glad I was to hear of this,

and instantly resolved to be revenged on him for all the injuries and churlish outrages that he had committed against me. I lay in wait, and about three hours later my lord and master made his appearance, whistling with joy at his heavy purse.

"I permitted him to pass, but soon overtook him, and, keeping close by him for a mile or two, when at length I found the coast clear, I rode up and seized his bridle, presented a pistol to his breast, and, in a

hoarse voice, demanded his purse, else he was a dead man. A palsy had so seized every part of him, that his eyes were incapable of directing his hands to his pockets. I soon recalled his spirits by two or three sharp blows with the flat of my sword, which speedily wakened him, and, with great trembling and submission he resigned his money. After I had dismounted him, I cut his horse's reins and saddle-girths, beat him soundly and dismissed him!"



The Swamp Grows

by
Charles Edward
Daniell

JIM UPDIKE poked a live coal out from the edge of the camp-fire and, jiggling it dexterously in the horny palm of his bare hand, dropped it on his pipe-bowl.

"And that's the reason, I suppose, boys," he remarked between puffs, "that I struck down into this country. I had had a taste of the real thing, you see—the life out-of-doors—and I couldn't cinch myself up to

the point of going back to 'You're half an hour late this morning.' And I wouldn't do it to-day for a block in Brooklyn."

"There's a story back of that incident, though," prompted Bob Anthony. "Let's have the whole thing, Updike."

"Yes, loosen up on the details, Jim," Tom Akers joined in. "Give us the yarn with all the curtains."

The three men were lounging around a

camp-fire on the east coast of Florida. They were all dog-tired. Since daybreak Jim Uptide and his New York friends had put in a hard day trailing the elusive "painter" along the edge of the Everglades. Uptide began:

WHY, I don't mind telling the story. You both know Hiram Strong and you probably remember that proposition he made me—that I should join him in his Georgia enterprise of getting out railroad ties down on the Burgos River. I never would have touched the scheme with a pair of blacksmith's tongs if I hadn't believed him to be a warm friend of mine—straight and loyal.

I was to put up five thousand against an equal amount from him and act as the managing Southern partner, while he received and sold the ties in the North. It struck me as a good business, and very profitable, from the figures he gave me, and though I was green at the job I'd "soon get the hang of it all," as he said. Meanwhile, I was to have a competent manager under me, who already was there. This proved to be a rattlesnake they called "Bad" Sanchos—half Cuban and half devil, I guess—a tall, gaunt, yellow-faced fiend, as smooth as velvet until you roughed him; then he'd grin like a hyena, and his long, sinister features and inky eyes radiated evil as a skunk spreads his warning.

The minute I clapped eyes on him I scented trouble ahead. Jerry Ryan saw through him, too, and was constantly warning me. There was a true-hearted, loyal little Irishman! Uneducated though he was, he was quick and intelligent. Poor little Jerry! We walked hell's floor together arm in arm for a while there.

Well, as you know, I accepted Strong's proposition, put up my five thousand, and sailed south. The concern had just leased a seven-thousand-acre tract of cypress swamp in Georgia, through which ran the Burgos River. This made it cheap and convenient for handling and transporting the ties, which could be loaded directly on to lighters and conveyed to chartered vessels lying at the mouth of the river. But as it was a new location, the entire equipment of the plant—horses, mules, tools and ninety men—had to be moved a distance of thirty miles. That seems almost a bagatelle.

But when for a third of the way a road is

to be cut through a practically virgin swamp, where in spots the water swashes against your horse's belly, it's scarcely a joke. And here was where I found myself a week from the day I left New York—riding a steady old swamp horse who picked his footing gingerly in two feet of muddy ooze and stagnant water; sixty negro axmen in the van chopping a road through fallen timber, and behind us a string of wagons loaded with provisions and the working equipment of a permanent camp.

It was during that ride that I got a foretaste of my manager's temper and first cottoned to Jerry. We were riding side by side, Jerry and I—Sanchos ahead with the axmen. Suddenly I heard a commotion at the front; shouts, threatening voices, with a plentiful sprinkling of curses, and raising up in the stirrups I saw one of the choppers, who was the only white man among them, menacing a negro with an up-lifted ax. The latter saved himself, however, by clutching the helve, and the two wrenched and struggled for the weapon. Then up plunged Sanchos through the mud and water, and pulling his revolver he deliberately fired at the black. Fortunately his horse reared and the shot went wide. In a moment more I had reached the spot, Jerry close behind me.

"What's the trouble here?" I demanded.

"Drunken nigger," replied Sanchos curtly. Then to the darky who had dropped weakly on to a stump and was leaning against a tree as limp as a rag, "You get back to the rear. I'll settle your case to-night."

"What has the man done?" I inquired.

"Attempted to strike a white man, mister. That don't go around these parts. You get to the rear and thank God you're alive!" he yelled at the negro.

Well, my blood began to surge just a little. It struck me as the psychological moment to put Mr. "Bad" Sanchos right on one or two points.

"I don't propose to have any shooting in this outfit," I said firmly. "If your shot had told we should have had a dead man on our hands. We'll cut out the shooting and murder—understand?"

The look he gave me held the same surprise that a man suddenly dropped from Mars might have evoked.

"Murder to kill a nigger?" he questioned.

"Yes, black or white—color regardless," I said.

He tendered me one of his sinister grins.

"You're in the Georgia swamps now, Mr. Updike," he sneered. "You've never handled blacks, have you?"

"Just remember," I said, ignoring his insolence, "that I have an interest in this business, and I'm satisfied that we can maintain discipline without any shooting. Mr. Strong would agree with me, I'm sure."

"Mr. Strong trusts me, Mr. Updike," he said smoothly. "Perhaps later on you'll understand me better."

And turning his horse's head sharply, he rode off.

"Tis the Cu-bean blood in him, sor," says Jerry. "He'd think no more of shooting a black man than one o' them wild swamp pigs—bad luck to him!"

"How long have you been with the outfit?" I asked.

"Three months. But I'm glad you come, sor. I'm the tie-inspector, but I was about thinkin' I'd quit, Mr. Updike. I seen the kind o' man he was, an' I've heard more," answered Jerry.

"You stick to the job, Jerry," I said. "We're going to have a new order of things from this time on."



LATE that night by the flare of pitch torches we finally emerged from the swamp and landed on a raised plateau covered with pine woods fringing the river's bank. It was a pretty spot, lifted a few feet above the stream, with a carpet of dry pine-needles underfoot, and an admirable location for a camp. Before us, the broad Burgos River flowed silently on to the ocean, while at our back the impenetrable swamp seeped up, enclosing us on three sides in its noisome arms.

In four days' time the timber was felled and utilized in building log houses which we ranged in a line two hundred feet back from the river front. Sanchos worked like a longshoreman—I'll say that for him. And in a week from the time we landed we were in trim for business, the cabins and stables ready for occupancy and a fifty-foot log pier for the use of the lighters.

Well, for a month—in fact, till our first pay-day—everything moved along as smooth as silk. Sanchos appeared anxious to reinstate himself in my good graces, and took pains to post me on every detail of

the business. It struck me he was almost too subservient. Still I had no reasonable cause to suspect him, save for an inherent dislike and distrust of the man.

Naturally, we messed together, and at table the only other white men officially recognized in the outfit joined us: Jerry, my little Irish inspector, and a man named Ike Paulen—a Georgia "Cracker" and a creature of Sanchos's in charge of the commissary, and ostensibly the paymaster. I took good care to keep an eye on him, however, and of course he handled no money. The men were paid each day with checks on the commissary as their ties were inspected. These checks they'd cash in for "stores" as needed, and every four weeks we'd redeem them with real money—if they had any checks left. This we called our monthly pay-day.



THIS pay-day occurred on a Saturday night, and it was about three days prior to it that Jerry rang up a surprise on me. Jerry and I were living together in one of the log cabins which stood near the commissary where I had my desk. I had stepped just outside the door for a moment when Sanchos entered. He bowed politely and, passing in, engaged Paulen in a whispered conversation. As I lingered, I could see out of the tail of my eye that they were both furtively watching me. I said nothing, and, lighting a cigar, joined Jerry in the cabin. The little man was industriously mending a torn shirt.

"A fine evenin', sor," he greeted me. "Have they seen anythin' of the *Santee* yet?"

The *Santee* was our weekly mail and provision boat.

"Not yet," I answered. "To-night is mail night, isn't it?"

"It is," says Jerry, "but it's more'n that to-night, sor. This is the boat before pay-day, and the blacks be lookin' for their whisky."

"Whisky!" I exclaimed. "What whisky?"

"The Cu-bean gives 'em all the rum they want on pay-day, sor—two barrels of it."

"Good——!" I cried. "Two barrels of whisky fed to ninety black roustabout! It'll drive them crazy."

"That's about what it do, sor," says Jerry, biting off a thread. "Faith, you'll see——broke loose on Saturday night if you never seen it before."

I waited to hear no more, but started for the commissary and confronted Sanchos. He gave me one of his oily grins.

"They demand it, Mr. Updike," he said coolly. "It's customary in every camp."

"This camp will be an exception, then," I retorted. "Two barrels of whisky among ninety men? It's criminal!"

He shrugged his shoulders and lit a fresh cigar.

"That isn't much," he said lightly. "Each man is allowed two quarts and a pint—no more. If they didn't have their liquor once a month we couldn't keep them. As I've remarked before, Mr. Updike, you're in the Georgia swamps now."

His attitude of impertinent tolerance sent the hot blood to my head. I lost my temper—gave him flatly to understand that he was merely an employee and that I should come pretty near laying down the rules myself.

"You don't understand this proposition, Mr. Updike," he said in a restrained voice. "These men wade knee-deep through this God-forsaken swamp for four weeks at a stretch, and then demand a blow-out. It's their only recreation. Don't they deserve it? Come! I ask you?"

"But two barrels!" I protested. "It's too much."

He shook his head.

"They wouldn't be satisfied with less. Besides, all don't drink their share at once. They save it to use against chills and fever."

I knew that was a lie, though it sounded plausible. Ninety-eight per cent. of them were immune.

"You use whisky and quinine daily, don't you?" he continued. "I have to."

"Yes," I admitted, "and an arrangement might be made to dole it out to them. It's the drunken orgy that I object to. This will have to stop. I shall check no liquor bills after this."

Sanchos stared. "No one asks you to pay any liquor bills, Mr. Updike," he returned. "Hasn't Mr. Strong told you? This is my affair!"

"What do you mean?"

I could scarcely believe my ears.

"Just that," he replied coolly.

"Do you mean to tell me that personally you sell and take the profit for this liquor?"

Sanchos grinned.

"Why, something like that, Mr. Updike. It's my perquisite, to put it that way. Do you think I'd bottle myself up in this — hole for the salary your firm pays me? Mr. Strong understands. It's in our agreement. He wants ties, and I want money. He furnishes the capital, and I guarantee the labor. Through my management the firm saves eleven cents on every oak tie we ship. Isn't my experience worth anything? Do you think you could handle this bunch of black brutes and keep them on the job, Mr. Updike—heh? Come, I ask you!"

The man's cool nerve amazed me. I was bewildered for a moment. But a great illuminating light suddenly burst upon me. In a flash it came to me that I was a mere figurehead! Strong had needed my five thousand to increase the business, and I was the catspaw.

"I suppose you realize that you are breaking the law," I said, taking hold of myself.

"Oh, no, I'm not," he replied blandly. "I'm hardly fool enough to take their money. Look here, Mr. Updike." He faced me squarely. "I've handled these propositions for twelve years. I think I know my business. Mr. Strong wrote me that you were coming with us—said you'd join me, but that there would be no interference. I know my book, and I always deliver the goods. I can plainly see that you don't like me, but—well, it might be good policy for us to try and get along."

"I shall write to Mr. Strong to-night," I said. "I believe I have a financial voice in this outfit."

"Five thousand dollars, isn't it, Mr. Updike?" he sneered. "Well, it'll pay good interest. But take my advice, sir. Keep your hands off."

I turned away and walked over to the cabin, inwardly raging. Jerry hailed me as I entered the door.

"The *Santee's* comin' up the river. sor. And faith, them men are rollin' up the whites o' their eyeballs."

II



YOU boys probably think I showed a rubber back-bone in all this, but just remember that I was handicapped by inexperience. Everything was new and strange—the country, the conditions, the weird, mysterious swamp hemming us in on three sides, and practically

impenetrable save with a guide. The business I was learning, and already I had grasped it fairly well. But the labor end of the proposition Sanchos was right about—it was utterly beyond me.

At night when the choppers, after working knee-deep in the stagnant ooze of the swamp all day, trailed into camp and flung down their daily catch of slimy, brown moccasins, the deadly danger and manifold aspects of the work were borne in upon me. As Sanchos said, they were brutes—ignorant and irresponsible. Yet, though savage by instinct, I always found them amenable to good treatment. I took care to make friends with a few of them, and it was afterward fortunate that I did.

Well, the *Santee* arrived and delivered her freight and the two barrels of whisky that night. I kept mum, but a stiff letter of protest to Strong was sent back by her. Sanchos and I maintained an outward truce, but we watched each other like a couple of cats. I noticed he was holding a good many whispered conversations with his man Paulen in the commissary. Something was going on; some scheme was hatching that he was anxious to hide. I remember the feel of my Colt's .44 in my hip pocket felt pretty good to me about that time.

For the next two nights Sanchos worked the men till nine o'clock loading ties on to the lighters. A full moon hung above us, transforming the swamp into a silvery fairy-land, and with a drawling singsong, "Come tie—you tie," the black crew worked in a perfunctory, sullen sort of way. I was surprised and rather suspicious. Night work was unusual.

"Sanchos is taking advantage of the moonlight, I suppose," I said to Jerry. "Something new, isn't it?"

"It is, sor. But I heard some news today in the swamp, Mr. Updike, and I most forgot to tell you. The Cu-bean has offered 'em the whisky free if they'd load them lighters after hours."

"That's funny," I said. "Hasn't he always sold it to them before?"

"He has that," says Jerry. "Law, or no law, he got paid for it somehow, though no one could ever swear he took the money. There's some new scheme in that devil's head of his. Tell me, sor, how much is the pay-roll to-morrow?"

"Six hundred dollars."

"Six hundred! An' d'ye think the Cu-bean'd let that get past him, Mr. Updike? Believe me, sor, he's got some new devilment afoot. He's scared of you."

I was inclined to believe that Jerry was right. Sanchos had taken alarm at my attitude. When the river gang finished their loading I was seated outside the cabin smoking in the moonlight. The Cuban, followed by six burly negroes, each wearing a new and conspicuous red flannel shirt, passed by. He bowed with one of his sinister smiles.

"Nice evening, Mr. Updike."

"Beautiful," I said. "You are working nights now?"

He walked toward me, while his red-shirted bodyguard stood stock still watching us.

"Yes," he said, "I've been anxious to ship those ties, and the moonlight has helped us out. By the way, Mr. Updike, I've been thinking over our talk the other day, and perhaps you're right. I've written Mr. Strong about it. I've told him that after this all liquor for the men must be handled and paid for by a member of the firm, and I've sent him the bills for these barrels."

"Very good," I replied. "Then I shall establish the custom of doling out a gill to each man after his day's work. And there will be no debauch."

"Exactly," he answered. "There will be no debauch, and every man will get his little taste of liquor every day. Yes, I'm curious to see how that will work out, Mr. Updike, and I throw up my little perquisite. Nothing could be fairer than that now, could it?" he asked, bowing his arms.

"Come, I ask you?"

"No," I agreed. "That will satisfy me."

"So to-morrow night will be their last blow-out, heh?" he observed, gazing up at the moon. "Well, we will try it. Good-night, Mr. Updike."

Jerry sprang out of the cabin door and watched the manager, surrounded by his flaming escort, pass down our log cabin thoroughfare and disappear. Then he turned to me with an anxious look.

"Holy Mary, Mr. Updike!" he cried. "There's some underhand work goin' on. An' there'll be trouble ahead with that Cu-bean or me name's not Ryan."

I instinctively felt that he was right. Why this sudden complacency? And what was the significance of that red-shirted guard?

III



WELL, boys, there are scenes in that eventful pay-day that followed which often come to me again in my dreams. Little Jerry's face has appeared again and again, stamped with the same expression of puzzled fear that it showed on his return from the swamp late the next afternoon. As he entered the cabin, the anxious question rose to my lips:

"What's the matter, Jerry?"

"Faith, sor, a whole lot's the matter," he replied, scratching his head. "I have bad news, Mr. Updike. Them naygers be goin' to make a break to-night."

"What do you mean by a break?"

"Just that, sor. They'll get their pay and then break away—leave the outfit."

"Who told you that?" I asked him.

"Merry Bolo. He's a good little un, Merry is, and a friend o' mine. He whispered it to me, sor. He says the blacks be crazy to get away from the Cu-bean, and they'll do it to-night. Big Jack Lunn leads 'em."

"Does Sanchos know of this?"

"They think he's after suspectin' it. That's why he loaded up the lighters, Merry says, and faith, I guess he's right. But Jo Tiger, the guide, is goin' to take 'em out through the swamp."

Here was a complication, not to say a catastrophe, that I had never even thought about, though I was far from realizing its grave import. Of course, they could be replaced, I thought. Georgia was overflowing with negroes.

"Let them go, Jerry," I said. "We'll hire another lot in their places."

The little man stared, then opened his mouth to speak and suddenly stopped. Sanchos's figure darkened the doorway.

The perpetual sneer on his features had given way to a troubled, anxious expression, and his black, gimlet eyes peered from beneath frowning brows.

"We pay off at nine o'clock in the commissary, Mr. Updike," he said, handing me a paper. "This is the correct numbered list. I shall be there, of course, to identify the men. But I'm going to ask a special favor of you to-night for your own good and for mine."

This had evidently a bearing on Jerry's news, but I decided to say nothing.

"Well?" I said.

"It's to allow me to handle everything that may occur to-night in my own way—to keep your hands off."

"I sha'n't interfere," I said. "I expect to see a mob of drunken negroes by midnight, but I'm prepared for it."

"I wish I could be sure you wouldn't," he answered. "But let me caution you, Mr. Updike, that whatever you do, under no consideration challenge my actions openly to-night. There may be trouble, but I shall expect to handle it in my own way."

"Why all this mystery?" I inquired. "I expect to stand by you. Be more explicit."

He shook his head.

"No use to explain," he replied. "You wouldn't understand, and you'd only argue and object. But I warn you again, if you know what is best for yourself and the business, keep your eyes closed to-night and your hands off."

And he walked away.

My eyes sought Jerry's.

"He's got wind of your news," I said.

"He has," replied the little man, "an' he's cookin' up some devil's scheme to beat them naygers that he's ashamed to tell yer, Mr. Updike. He better look out, though. Merry Bolo says seventy of 'em have sworn not to drink a drop till they get away."

Sanchos's attitude, indicating as it did a mild tolerance, keenly nettled me. I felt like a lectured schoolboy. The fact that my money was boosting the proposition made this none the easier to bear, you may believe. And yet, as I smoked outside the cabin in the moonlight, I was forced to admit that considering my inexperience he was more or less right.

There was a crafty courage in the man that there was no denying. Much as I disliked him, I was compelled to acknowledge that he knew his business, that he controlled and held that black mob together by his iron-handed, if questionable, methods. The negroes hated him, but they all feared him. And when, an hour later, Jerry and I walked over to the commissary to pay off and passed a sea of sullen, scowling black faces, I decided I'd take Mr. "Bad" Sanchos's advice and, as he put it, keep my hands off.



HE WAS leaning against the counter as we entered, smoking a cigar—a grim, determined look on his long, yellow face. Two revolvers were conspicuously belted at his waist, and scattered

around the room, on boxes and barrels, his six red-shirted guards sat solemnly holding rifles across their knees. As I moved over to the desk he joined me.

"Take my advice, Mr. Updike, and display your gun," he said. "And you, too," he added to Jerry. "It's well to have 'em see them," and with that he went out on the platform of the commissary and called out ten names. As the men filed in, Sanchos lined them up, and they stood waiting in turn with stolid patience. Everything went along without a hitch. In an hour's time the entire crew had been paid off and had moved away. I noticed, however, as they passed out, that every man headed in the same direction.

"One word more, Mr. Updike," he said, when the last man had gone. "Paulen is already giving out the whisky in the big bunk-house. If I were in your place, I'd keep out of it. Why don't you and Ryan go back to your cabin and stay quietly inside? Will you take my word that it's for the best?"

This was just a grain too much.

"Look here!" I flared; "just remember, please, that I'm over seven! I'm satisfied you can handle this game better than I, and I'm willing to stand aside. But if I choose to go up to that bunk-house a little later, go I shall!"

His lips curled in a sneer, and his beady eyes glittered.

"All right," he said, "satisfy your curiosity. Come up and see me work and scheme to meet brute force with brains." Then suddenly his brows knit fiercely, and his features twitched with passion. "Can't you understand I'm trying to save your money for you?" he cried. "Haven't I got enough on my hands to-night with that bunch of black brutes without your blocking my way? Well, I'll give you one last warning. If you do come up, keep your morals to yourself and your teeth clenched tight, as you value your life!"

And before I could answer him he had dashed off.

For a moment I choked with anger. Then I turned to Jerry, who sat dumbly staring at the doorway.

"Come on," I said. "We'll go back to the cabin and load up with cartridges. Then I'm going up to that bunk-house."

"I'll be with you, sor," said the little man. "Holy Mary! what's he hidin' up

there that he's so afraid of, Mr. Updike? I never seen the Cu-bean like that before."

"I give it up," I replied, as we walked back to the cabin. "But I'm going to get on to his game now in about ten minutes."

We filled our pockets with ball cartridges, and slipping another revolver into my belt, we started off. The bunk-house stood at the extreme end of the clearing and was the largest of all the houses. It was a low, log structure forty feet square directly facing the river, with a doorless opening at the front and rear. There were no windows in it, which mattered little, for the loosely laid logs yawned cracks that supplied ample ventilation, and rain, too, in bad weather.

As we drew nearer it was easy to distinguish through the gaps between the logs forms moving about inside, and I was surprised to find everything so orderly. There would be intervals of almost perfect silence, broken by intermittent howls of delight, or again by groans and cat-calls. Jerry and I approached the back door and looked in.



THE place was packed with negroes. A swinging oil-burner hung from the roof, saturating the hot, fetid atmosphere with the sickening odor of kerosene and bathing the sweaty features of the eager, excited blacks in a dim, yellow haze. Directly under the lamp stood Sanchos surrounded by his red-shirted guard. Beside him was Paulen clutching an empty meal sack, and as we stepped through the doorway, and I crept up behind the surging, tiptoeing mass, the sharp jingle of silver coin caught my ear.

Sanchos stood with his back toward me, covering the mystery. But I moved softly along the edge of the crowd, and raising up on my toes, I saw his game in a flash. He was bending over a rude platform laid on top of three barrels, on which was drawn a circle with figures, and alternating spaces chalked around the outer rim, in numbers running from one to ten. In the center of the disk a crude iron bar revolved on a pivot with a slow, wobbly movement as it was whirled. In short, it was about the rawest imitation of a roulette layout that you could imagine.

"Make your bets, men!" he called. "Anything from fifty cents up. Try your luck, men, and win the money!"

A dozen or more pressed forward and placed their coins opposite the figures. He

whirled the jiggle bar till it revolved drunkenly three times and finally stopped at number nine. A chorus of yells filled the house.

"There you have it!" cried Sanchos. "Nine for one, and Bucko Jake calls the turn. Four dollars and a half for fifty cents. Here you are, Jake."

He passed the amount to a big, grinning daky, and swept the coins off the table into Paulen's bag.

That was enough. The crowd, as one man, now shoved, pushed and fought to get their money on the table. At the next whirl of the pointer it stopped at a blank. As Sanchos coolly scooped the silver into the bag he was greeted with groans and hoots of disappointment.

The hot blood surged up into my neck and head. So this was his game! This was the reason he was willing to give them free whisky; this was why he was anxious I should stay quietly in the cabin! The six-hundred-dollar pay-roll he fairly hungered for, as Jerry had predicted, and he was bound to have it. This was his scheme, then, to snatch his perquisite, and I was the stumbling-block. And I, poor fool, was a mere figurehead—a complacent nonentity to be cuddled and patted on the back, but expected to keep my hands off when he told me to, while he openly robbed the negroes with a fake gambling layout, and disgraced the concern! I turned to Jerry.

"I've seen enough," I said. "I'm going to break it up."

"Go easy. For God's sake, go easy, Mr. Updike!" warned Jerry.

Three big bucks just ahead of us with quart bottles glued to their lips turned and leered drunkenly. They were all drinking harder now, and as the play proceeded the excitement and noise grew more intense. Some howled improvised songs to the numbers they played, screaming the figures with a feverish frenzy.

Others in a transport of drunken delirium danced madly up and down, swaying their bodies to the tune, the whites of their eyes rolling grotesquely. The place was a veritable hall of pandemonium. Then my eye fell upon the iron pointer as Sanchos whirled it again, and I saw it stop at the figure ten. A furious bellow of joy shook the house. There were six dollar bets piled on number ten. This last turn of the bar was going to cost Mr. "Bad" Sanchos sixty dollars.

For a brief moment he hesitated. Then he flipped the pointer off the figure.

"It lacked a quarter of an inch," he declared. "It didn't point fairly at the number."

A deathlike silence fell upon the crowd. Amazement was stamped on every eager, scowling face. Then big Jack Lunn, a giant negro, bare-chested, with a machete stuck in his belt, pushed his way through the throng up to the table. Behind him the glowering rabble pressed so close that the guards were pushed back against the layout.

"Stand back!" roared Sanchos.

"She done win dat money, Boss!" bawled Jack Lunn. "I seen her. Ev'y one seen her."

"Stand back!" yelled Sanchos, brandishing his revolver and pushing the nearest men from him.

The guards forced the clamoring mob back a foot or more. The Cuban stood facing them with a pistol in each hand, his yellow features grimly set and his eyes like two dots of glittering coal.

"Take care!" he stormed. "You know me! I'll plug a hole through the first nigger that takes a step forward! I tell you the pointer was off the number. You took a sporting chance and lost."

That was the electric spark that touched off the smoldering fires of my wrath. Yes, I'll admit it—I completely lost my head! In another moment I had pushed my way through the surging mêlée and confronted him.

"Sporting chance!" I exclaimed. "Why, you fakir, your poney layout never gave the poor devils so much as a look in! So this was your little game, hey? Well, it's going to stop right here!"

He lowered his pistols, and his eyes leaped to mine like flashing steel. A silence fell, broken only by the heavy breathing of the crowd, as they leaned expectantly forward, their forbidding features alert with surprise and suspicion. Then his lips curled like an angry bulldog's.

"Oh, you fool!" he breathed tensely. "You boneheaded fool!"



I HAVE since tried to remember all that happened next, but events moved too swiftly. A sudden roar went up, then a tidal wave of black bodies engulfed us. I pulled my revolver and

swung the butt wildly against the swarming onrush. Behind the layout Sanchos stood grimly firing with both hands. For a brief moment he halted them, bellowing with rage and pain.

Then a burly negro wrenched the pistol from my grasp. I saw the red-shirted guard go down like ninepins, and the Cuban lift his guns and aim deliberately at the swinging lamp. He struck it fair, smashing the glass receiver into a thousand splinters, and the last glimpse I had of him in the dying light the mob was on top of him and had pulled him down with howls of joy.

Then complete darkness enveloped us. I fought frantically to reach the wall of the bunk-house. But the surging mass caught me up like a feather, and when once more I landed on my feet I stumbled over a body on the floor and, falling heavily with one arm twisted under me, I fainted.

I don't know how long I remained unconscious. When I came to the moonlight lay inside the doorway like a broad white sheet and the place was silent as a tomb. Then I realized that some one was chafing my hands.

"Thank God, sor, you've come to at last!"

It was Jerry bending over me.

"Where are the rest of them?" I asked.

"Where is Sanchos?"

"The Lord knows, sor. Merry Bolo's gone to find out what they done with him. Them black devils had him bound hand and foot and took him off yelling curses at 'em. Holy Mary! what a night!"

"Terrible!" I said. "I'm sorry now I didn't let his crooked scheme run its length. But he's got a white skin, Jerry, and we're bound to rescue him if he's alive."

"Merry says he's killed four of them, and crippled three more," said the little man. "If he isn't a'ready dead, sir, they'll sure kill him."

I tried to turn over, and the pain in my arm stabbed me like a knife. I felt sure that it was broken. But I gritted my teeth and raised up painfully on my elbow as Merry Bolo, the swamp ducky, entered the house and crept softly up to us.

"Dey done got de boss tied to a tree back o' Jack Lunn's cabin," he declared. "Dey's two of 'em watchin'. But dey'll sure lynch dat man in de mornin', Mr. Updike."

After the night's experience, I was fully prepared to believe it.

"Where are the rest of them?" I asked.

"All lyin' round drunk, sir. Some in de cabins an' some in de swamp."

"We've got to cut him loose and all get away somehow," I said. "How about a boat?"

"Pete Storm's fishin' dinghy's tied near the commissary," said Jerry.

I rose painfully to my feet.

"You hustle all the stuff out of our cabin you can lay your hands on," I directed Jerry, "and get it down to that boat. Merry and I will go after Sanchos."



WE GROUPED at the door and peered outside, then slipped softly across the road under the shadow of the timber. The streaming moonlight picked every object out in silvery brilliance as clear as at noonday, and I was thankful enough that the men were too far gone in liquor to detect us. My arm, too, hung helpless, racked with pain, and for a rough-and-tumble fight I was as helpless as a babe.

But I clutched my sheath-knife in my one good hand, for there could be no shooting. My conscience was troubling me, too, somewhat. The Cuban's skin game might have come to the same disastrous result in the end; still there was no question but that I had precipitated the awful crisis. I was heartily sorry now that I had ignored his warning and lost my head. Scoundrel though he was, there was a daring nerve in the man that attracted me.

The camp was as quiet as a churchyard. But as we crept along to the farther end of the log village an occasional groan caught my ear. Merry touched me and pointed to a slight rise of ground on the river's bank. The dying embers of a camp-fire glowed in the waning moonlight and around it in a radius of a hundred yards sprawled the negroes—the wounded tossing and groaning, the others simply dead drunk. Then he moved his finger to a spot directly behind one of the cabins, and I saw Sanchos, a battered, huddled figure, his knees sagging against the ropes, his chin forward on his chest, securely bound to a tree.

We stole across the road and, creeping along in the shadow of the cabin, approached the rear. The two guards were lying flat on their backs, apparently asleep. Sanchos was evidently suffering tortures, for now

and again a deep groan escaped him, and as I heard it I couldn't but feel a twinge of remorse.

For a brief moment I stood eyeing the two sleeping guards, then stepped out of the shadow, and as I did so he raised his head and I caught a glint of the same old fire from his glittering eyes. But a further look at his face halted my step. He had evidently been horribly manhandled. His distorted features were a swollen mass of soft, beaten pulp, resembling a bloody sponge! It was a sickening sight.

I crept up to him, knife in hand, followed by the negro. He turned his head weakly, as if in recognition. "So! they didn't kill you, heh?" he moaned. "You're lucky."

"No," I said. "Jerry and I are all right. I'm sorry. I didn't realize——"

"Hurry!" he groaned. "Loose me! For God's sake, cut me loose!"

And as Merry and I slashed at the ropes I saw one of the guards stir and babble in his sleep. From the two empty bottles beside him, I was relieved to feel that he must be helpless. But as we cut the last strand away he suddenly raised himself on to his elbow and gave us a groggy, undiscerning stare. For half a minute we eyed him in breathless suspense. Then his eyelids rolled down, his head jerked back, and he toppled over in a drunken torpor.

"Come," I said, "Jerry has a boat all ready at the commissary landing. Are you badly hurt?"

The negro and I were holding him up between us. He was very weak and wabbly.

"Three or four bullets in my legs and arms, I believe," he moaned, "and every bone in my body feels cracked or broken. Get me to a doctor quick!"

His head dropped forward on his chest. But he nerved himself for the effort, and leaning heavily on us, he hobbled painfully down to the river. Here I found Jerry had most of our things in the boat, and spreading my blankets in the bow, I laid the Cuban on them. He sank down with a groan, and as we pushed off into the stream the first dim streaks of dawn shot through the deep recesses of the swamp and touched with a faint dull gray the bearded live-oaks scattered here and there along the river's banks.



AN EBB-TIDE was fortunately flowing. Jerry took the oars, and I seated myself on the forward thwart facing Sanchos. With wet towels I did what I could for his bloated face.

"Why didn't you take my word for it?" he murmured feebly. "Seventy-five of those crows had sworn to break away last night before drinking a drop. I rigged that game to hold 'em—I knew if they played they'd drink. Yes, it was a rotten deal, perhaps. But I did it for the firm and for you. Rum's the only thing that'll anchor a swamp nigger."

"Why didn't you explain all that?" I said.

"No use," he replied very weakly. "You wouldn't have stood for it. I wouldn't have blamed you, either. But you'll never get on to this proposition, Mr. Updike. It's in a class by itself. Take my advice and quit. If I live, you can bank on it that I'm through with the swamp crows for good!"

Late that night we reached Belfonte, and Jerry and I saw Sanchos safely in the hands of the hospital physicians. He was in pretty bad shape, but I heard afterward that he came out all right. Then, after my arm had been patched up, I placed my affairs in the hands of a good lawyer—it was a case of mob violence and never came to trial—and after writing Strong a detailed statement of the case and my determination to quit the business forever, Jerry and I lit out for the Florida east coast to get a new start.

So here I am just an "onery" orange planter, and as independent and happy as a lark. But some fine day that long-talked-of railroad will take a header down the east coast from Rock Ledge, and then, boys, my hundred and sixty acres of Government land will rather fix Jim Updike up!

"AND what became of the little Irishman?" asked Anthony.

The orange planter laughed.

"Oh, Jerry's all right. Jerry preempted a hundred and sixty acres, too. His place is about three miles south of here. At the present writing he's deep in politics. They've made Jerry tax-collector."

The Bell

OF Guadalupe

by G.W. Ogden



LITTLE FATHER JUAN stood listening to the bell in the church at Guadalupe banging away in a strange, wild alarm. Before him was the camp of the United States troopers, close against the margin of the Rio Grande; behind him the village of La Isla, clustered about the white-walled church which brooded over the mean *jacales* of its communicants like a swan in the midst of its young.

Over across the thin river, stretched there a slender thread upon the plain, Guadalupe stood against the blue hills out of sight, but the voice of the bell, which had spoken kindly for twenty years under the command of his hand, called to him in strange notes, like a lost, wailing child.

"They will be there this morning," said Father Juan, turning to the captain of Texas Rangers, a great brown, placid man, who stood beside him, "spitting filthy tobacco upon the clean floor, which I worked very hard to put down only a week ago."

"But why are they ringing your bell, Father Juan?"

"They do it always when they come into a village, these brigands whom Don Porfirio sends against the people who dare to speak

for their rights. It is their thought to call the poor *gente* in from the *bosque* and impress the men into the starved, ragged army. But they are wise, my poor people of Guadalupe, they know my touch upon the bell-cord, and the soldiers of Don Porfirio may ring until the tongue falls from the bell!"

Father Juan, *cura* of three parishes, taking together his clerical duties and his labors as carpenter, mason and architect in the matter of building, altering or repairing his churches, was a busy man. Two of his charges lay on the Texas shore, with sixty miles between them, and the other was in the old Mexican village of Guadalupe.

Once a week he chanted the mass at Guadalupe, twice a month at the station down the river, riding thither on a little roan horse in two easy stages, stopping over a day to console the bereaved, cheer the sick, shrive the dying, baptize the newly born. In the intervals at La Isla he was as industrious a little padre of the people as ever lived in the cause of liberty in the land south of the narrow, Nile-red Rio Grande.

Recruiting guardedly among the young men, raising funds for the *revoltosos* among the old, despatching across the border by night, right under the guns of the United

States soldiers, little bands of men with little bundles of effective rifles and ammunition, Father Juan, in his short alpaca coat, the black dye of which was merging into brown from weather, wear and age, hadn't much time for dreams. When he thought of a thing he thought effectively, each idea falling upon the subject like the blow of an ax.

"They will be there this morning," he repeated, frowning as he listened to the bell, "prying around like thieves!"

"I hope they'll not find anything, Father Juan," smiled the Ranger Captain, who, out of his natural sympathy for the oppressed, had been winking at the recruiting and other operations for carrying arms into a friendly nation for months.

"It is my new clean floor, Captain Harper; my floor, which I hammered my thumbs to a jelly in laying during the rainy weather last week, when it was so dark I could not see the nail-heads properly," said the priest, looking up at the Texan's face with an expression of innocent sincerity.

"When did Joe Morales go over to the other side?" asked the Captain.

"Morales?" flashed Padre Juan, searching the Captain's unreadable features. "What should I know of the comings and goings of these boys?"

"I thought it was Morales that I saw a little while ago over there in the willows. He acted like he was afraid to cross."

"So it must be," said the priest, suddenly interested in Morales and his movements. "Morales it must be, indeed. I recall now that he went last night to Guadalupe for news, promising to come to me this morning. Foolish fellow, so that he leaves his rifle in the willows there is nothing to fear of the soldiers here. I will speak to the sergeant in command and signal the timid boy to come."



BUT Morales, who had made more than one scouting expedition into Mexico during the weeks following the withdrawal of General Orozco's insurrecto force, reporting the Federal advance from day to day to Padre Juan, was neither so timid nor so stupid as the priest would have, for friendly reasons, made him out to be. Having hidden his rifle where it would be safe from prowling Federal scouts, he advanced across the sandy margin of the river and plunged into the stream.

"He is an American citizen," Padre Juan assured the soldiers, who marked his advance questioningly; "he was born here and is coming home from a visit to his grandmother in Guadalupe."

Morales was through the trickle which does the best it can to maintain the dignity of the Rio Grande during the Winter months, without wetting his belt.

"There is news in Guadalupe to-day," said the youth. "Eighty Federals have taken the town. This morning they hung Doctor Flores, afterward tearing his body to pieces with Mauser balls!"

"That is bad," said Padre Juan, a dark shadow on his face.

"But there is more," continued the courier, turning to Captain Harper. "In the night they crossed to the camp where Ranger Moorehouse was stationed near the bridge at Fabens, and carried him prisoner to Guadalupe. They say he has been helping us, and they are going to try him to-day as a rebel spy. To-morrow at sunrise they will hang him, also. That is their threat."

Priest and Ranger Captain confronted each other questioningly.

"Can it be true?" wondered Padre Juan.

"Would they dare lay hands on him?" doubted the Captain.

"There can be no doubt," said Morales. "Viola Flores herself saw him, with his hands bound. They have him in the church, where they have made their camp."

"Moorehouse should have reported this morning," said the Captain. "He didn't, and I sent a man down to find out why. So, they say he's a spy. They come over here and kidnap him, do they?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Morales.

"Of course they will say that he was taken on Mexican territory," said the priest. "It all comes from Moorehouse visiting the daughter of Flores. There has been jealousy, and threats before to-day."

"Once he was seen to shake hands with General Madero in El Paso, also," commented Morales.

"Ah, then he is condemned already," said the little priest; "they will hang him for that alone, those murderous soldiers of Don Porfirio!"

"They say he was taken in the house of Doctor Flores, where arms were found," Morales told them, "but that is not true."

They were seen by many crossing the river with him early this morning."

"This is a grave matter, Captain Harper. What action are you going to take?" inquired the priest.

The Captain was studying his watch.

"I'm going to take this morning's train for El Paso and lay the case before the United States Consul at Juarez," the Captain returned. "If he can't wake up General Navarro to act in a hurry and turn that boy loose— Well, we'll see. I'll be back here on the evening train."

"I'll go with you if you believe that I can be of any service," volunteered Padre Juan. "I have many strong friends in Juarez through whom we may reach Navarro in case the Consul can do nothing."

"Yes, I want you," the Ranger answered shortly.

It turned out that there wasn't much to be hoped for from the Consul. He was willing and energetic enough, to be sure, but he was worked by wires which had to be pulled from Washington. General Navarro received them graciously, promising to investigate the matter at once. The Ranger Captain insisted the investigation would be very well in its time and place, but that the thing required to save the captive's life was an immediate order for his release. On no condition, said the General, could he think of blindly overriding the judgment of the Colonel in command at Guadalupe. He would investigate, certainly, and at once.

The Captain and the Consul left with that. The priest reported that he had been unable to move his friends to meddle in the matter at all. They feared the wrath of the Government in case the threatened attack of the insurgents upon the city should fail. It was best to keep clear of all entanglements. The Captain and the padre walked back across the international bridge, car service between El Paso and Juarez having been suspended on account of the pending assault upon the Mexican city by Madero's army, which lay entrenched around it.

"The city will fall to-morrow, and the bloody rule of Diaz will be at an end!" said Father Juan, standing a moment at the bridge rail, gazing down the river where the brown tents of the insurgent army stood.

"It's hard to tell," the Captain returned; "they seem kind of timid about it."

"To-morrow," the priest repeated, decisively, "will see the end!"

The Captain looked at him sharply.

"You're a queer one, Father Juan," said he.

A United States soldier stepped to the middle of the roadway from the little sentinel coop flying the flag, and stood in front of them.

"Have you bought or acquired anything in Mexico?" he questioned perfunctorily.

"We have neither bought nor acquired anything," answered the Captain; "least of all acquired." They passed on, and as they trudged up the dusty street between the poor habitations of the Mexican quarter, Padre Juan smiled, slyly. "Perhaps we acquired something, after all," said he.

"Tell me?" said the Captain.

"To-morrow," answered Padre Juan, "Juarez will fall."

"That'll help some," said the Captain, "but I've got a notion in my head that Guadalupe'll beat Juarez to it by several hours."



TWELVE men gathered on the shadowy bank of the river across from La Isla before midnight, having crossed singly at points left to their individual selection. Padre Juan met each comer at a point agreed upon and conducted him to the rendezvous. There seemed to be no one else with a voice of authority there, and he impressed absolute silence upon all of them.

"Now," said he, when the last dripping man had joined them, "we go to strike a blow for liberty. To-morrow Porfirio Diaz will fall. *Adelante!*"

Eighty Federals were holding the church at Guadalupe, according to the report of Morales, and Morales was a brave and trustworthy lad. That made them nearly seven to one, but Padre Juan was not outwardly troubled. He led his band along an irrigation ditch, past houses from which the inhabitants had fled across the border or into the brush away from the vengeance of the Federal soldiers, bringing up in a vineyard on the edge of the village.

"Now go, Morales, to your duty," directed the priest, and Morales disappeared in the darkness. Four more were called upon by name, and as mysteriously despatched, and then Padre Juan gathered those remaining close about him. "The one ques-

tion is the question of arms and ammunition," he explained. "Men enough we shall have, but we must first enter the church and come out again before we can take it from the *federales*, or free our friend Moorehouse whom they have threatened to hang in the morning.

"There is a small house near the church, but two rods from it in truth, where the widow of Manuel Nuñez lives. We must proceed cautiously, each man with his life in his hands, to the house of the widow, therefore, for there is the key of the church."

"You're a queer one, Father Juan," chuckled a big man who stood head and shoulders above the priest. The night concealed the features of this man, but his voice sounded not like the voice of one born to the Spanish tongue.

"No matter," answered Padre Juan. "*Adelante*, follow me."

Sentinels walked softly up and down the deserted street of Guadalupe where the old adobe church stood, sentinel fires burning before its very door. Padre Juan left his men in the shadow of some pear-trees behind the widow's house and set forth to sound the night for dangers.

"I know the ground better than any of you," said he; "I know it inch by inch."

Returning after a little while, he reported the way clear. In the complete confidence of their mastery of the situation, the Federal soldiers had bivouacked in the church, with only their sentries on the outside.

"Our friend is locked in the vestry; I have looked inside," said Padre Juan. "Two men guard his door, the light from the high altar—may they wither for the sacrilege!—removed from its place for lighting their cigarettes. The others sleep like goats upon the floor."

Padre Juan led his small force into the widow's house through the back door, the widow herself, old, and brown-wrinkled like a leaf of tobacco, admitting them in trembling eagerness.

"God protect you this night, Padre Juan, and you, señores!" said she.

Padre Juan, seeing first that all window-blinds were down, took candles from his pockets, distributing them among his men. Then he opened a trap-door in the widow's kitchen floor, disclosing a little stairway.

"Come," said he, "this is the key." When the last man was down, the widow closed the trap-door behind them. "Light

your candles," said Padre Juan; "now we may speak, but carefully, and not as if we were a gay party in a *cantina*."

The tall man lifted his candle, stooping under it, gazing along the little passage which ran toward the church.

"Well, you *are* a wonder, Father Juan!" admired he.

"Men will do much in the cause of liberty and justice," meekly replied Padre Juan. "This tunnel is but one of the small arteries through which the blood of liberty flows in this sad land of tyrants. It leads to a spot just before the high altar, where good old Padre Augustin, the founder of the parish, is said to lie buried. But no, Padre Augustin is not there. He is in another place. No matter. There you will find not the bones of Padre Augustin, but rifles and cartridges which the men who are to be roused by Morales and the others will need when they arrive. These we must bring out, without noise, and place them here, where we stand. Our candles we must leave behind us in this spot, for those goats in the church might see the light between the crevices of the floor if we carried them with us. I will go first, knowing where to put my hand on the arms, and pass them out to you."



WHEN Padre Juan halted them by a touch which was sent back along the line, they could hear the scraping of the sentries' sandaled feet who watched the captive Ranger's door, just over their heads, and beyond them, in the body of the church, the snoring of the soldiers who slept upon the floor. One careless or unlucky movement among them, an unsteady hand clashing metal upon metal, would have brought a storm of Mauser balls down through the floor. So Padre Juan and his men worked silently, carrying out the stored ammunition and arms.

Before they were through their perilous task, Morales and his comrades joined them. They stood in the pit at the foot of the stairs handing the arms out to the reinforcements.

"How many of them came?" questioned Padre Juan when he came out of the dark hole beneath the church.

"Thirty," answered Morales.

"That makes us forty-two; quite sufficient," said Padre Juan. He detailed ten men to go back into the crypt beneath the

church, Morales and the tall man, and one with whom the latter held frequent whispered converse, among the number. "Morales, you know the secret of the trap-door?" he said.

"Yes," answered Morales, "it opens inwardly."

"Just so," said Padre Juan. "So if any of them are asleep on it when the time comes, that will not matter at all. What you are to do, and when, you know as well as I."

"Yes, Padre Juan," said Morales, crushing the spark of his cigarette out against the wall.



IT WAS at that stage of the night when weary men sleep heaviest that the sentinels in front of the vestry door dropped their cigarettes and hugged their rifles fearfully, muttering a frightened question to each other through the gloom.

"Mother of God, that is the bell!" said one.

"It strikes as for the dead!" whispered the other. "Listen!"

Again, slowly, with mournful tempo, sounded the bell in the little tower. "There is no one at the rope," said one; "I can see it hanging in the door between me and the firelight, as it was yesterday!"

Again the bell. Sleeping soldiers moved, sitting up wonderingly. A sentry on the outside called through the open door, "Who rings the bell?" There was no answer, save from the bell, which clanged again, again, a long pause between the beats, as it rings for the mass for the dead.

"There's a mystery," said the sentry, rousing the Colonel of the command; "the bell rings with no one to ring it!"

"Foolishness!" said the Colonel, throwing off his blankets, springing to his feet.

Within the church the soldiers were getting to their feet in confusion, calling upon their saints, counting frightened fragments of prayers.

"Stop it!" commanded the Colonel; "it is some rebel in the tower. Here," to the men within, "send me twenty bullets up into that nest and see if it will not be still!"

Out of the church the soldiers rushed, all order routed by fright. Scattering shots were fired into the tower, the Colonel discharging his revolver at the bell itself, but

the mystery only deepened. The bell tolled on.

"There is no one in the tower," said a soldier; "it is all open—the sky is on all sides. Mother of God, it is a miracle!"

The men crowded around their perplexed Colonel, who stood in the street, staring up at the calling bell. True, no man could hide there; the sky was on all sides.

"It is the spirit of Padre Augustin," said one; "he is buried beneath the altar. They told us yesterday that he would rise up and drive us out!"

"Children!" scoffed the Colonel, "babies! Dead priests do not rise up and ring bells any more than dead horses rise up and eat grass. Come, into the church, follow me!"

But Morales and the others had come through the secret trap. At the door of the church the Colonel fell, a rifle-ball through his breast, and men fell around him in the blaze of death which leaped at them from the darkness within the door. Ranger Moorehouse, freed at the first moment by his friends, was with the defenders of the church, taking a gratifying revenge for the humiliation he had undergone and the threats which he had suffered.

Out of the darkness the men under Padre Juan's command fired upon the disorganized soldiers in the street. Those left living after the first discharge plunged into the darkness and fled.

The victors gathered around the priest as dawn broke over the gray desert lands, but the tall man and his comrade, as well as the rescued Ranger, were not there. Morales grinned knowingly.

"It was the miracle of the bell," said he, "that cleared them out of the church."

"Ah," gasped the others, "it was marvelous, ringing as for the dead!"

"It was no miracle," said Padre Juan. "A wise man sees into the future and builds his house to meet it. As for me, I saw this day weeks ago, for do not the forces of Don Porfirio taunt us by taking up quarters in our churches always? Ah, yes, the adobe walls are thick, they will not burn. A thin wire from the bell tower into the good widow's house moved the tongue of the bell to speak! Just so. Very simple, indeed."

And so it was that the bell of Guadalupe saved the church from being polluted with human blood, through its padre being a wise man with an eye that could see quite clearly through the wall of the future.

 THREE weary men had waded the Rio Grande. One of them was Moorehouse, the Ranger. On the Texas side they sat down on the bank to empty their boots. The sun was rising, and the sound of cannon came down the river from the direction of Juarez, ten miles away.

"Sunrise was the time fixed for me to swing," said Moorehouse, looking with greater appreciation upon the luminary by which men walk by day than ever before in his life. "I was dreamin' they had the rope around my neck when you fellers

came along and broke down the door."

Captain Harper looked at him queerly. "What fellers?" said he.

"You fellers, of course, and Joe Morales and the rest of the boys," Moorehouse replied.

"Couldn't 'a' been us," denied the Captain, shaking his head solemnly. "Don't you know it'd be an unfriendly act to invade a nation we're at peace with, bearin' arms? Under no condition could I permit that."

"That's right," reflected Moorehouse. "Sometimes a feller talks too much."



The Empty House by Herbert Ravenel Sass

 O CAPTAIN MICHAEL O'HALLORAN, enjoying the fresh breezes of the River Park on an August afternoon, came a loose-limbed mulatto youth whose face twitched and whose hands trembled as he shambling forward along the shell walk. Captain O'Halloran growled deeply as he

saw his underling approaching—as a mastiff might growl or an old and ill-tempered lion. When the boy halted in front of him, the Captain eyed him fiercely from the bench and spoke out of his bristling beard with a voice like the mutterings of thunder:

"You yaller dog," was his courteous greeting. "What d'you want now?"

The boy's eyes rolled upward, showing white. The hand that held his cap shook, and it was probably not without good reason that he stood out of reach of the Captain's long legs.

"Mistah Thompson's drunk again, suh," he whined. "He come down to de boat jes' now and lef' again an' he say you won't see him till to-morrer."

Captain O'Halloran did not begin to curse until he had gained his feet; then from between his tobacco-stained lips profanity poured in a tremendous flood. Six feet four, he towered above the boy, his huge face red, blue veins bulging on his forehead, his long arms waving like flails.

"Go back to the schooner, — you!" he shouted. "Tell Mr. Beasley to make ready to sail with the ebb to-night. Tell him I've gone after that drunken sot of a mate an' I'll be aboard with him, dead or alive, before midnight! Tell him——"

He swung around, as a hand rested on his shoulder, and looked down into the face of a policeman. Instantly the rage went out of Captain O'Halloran's countenance. The frown remained; but the corners of his mouth drooped, his gray eyes blinked rapidly, even his red and bulbous nose became less red though not less bulbous. Grief, not fury, possessed him.

The policeman spoke sharply, his club tight in his right hand.

"You're under arrist," he said, "fer cursin' in the park in the prisince of leddies."

Captain O'Halloran sobbed.

"Officer," he said huskily, "this nigger, who is the cook on my schooner, has just brought me word of the death of my little girl. She was killed by a ortermobile in New Haven, Connecticut. I guess I did take on some when I heard the news." And he fished a huge blue handkerchief from his hip pocket and wiped away a non-existent tear. "Me name's O'Halloran," he added brokenly, "skipper o' the schooner *James T. James*. She was me only darter."

Private O'Beirne of the Kingshaven police force was no softer of heart and no more of a fool than the average policeman. Nevertheless, his words were very kindly as he turned to go.

"Well, then, by Moses, we'll fergit about the arrist. But don't curse the ortermobilist so divilish loud."

"Sufferin' Satan!" muttered Captain O'Halloran into the depths of his beard as

he walked slowly away. "What a blitherin' fat-headed fool!"

II



DUSK found him in a region of evil houses; and if the houses were evil, not less evil was the smell. This came chiefly from little negro cook-shops here and there along the street—tiny two-roomed hovels sandwiched in among the larger buildings and thronged with black and yellow men come to eat a supper of fish and loaf the night away.

Captain O'Halloran strode swiftly, glancing neither to right nor left. He walked in shirt-sleeves, with his coat slung across his arm, for August in Kingshaven is the hottest of the months.

As he marched along, dodging those of the signs and globes that swung less than six feet five inches above the pavement, deep curses and now and then the name of Thompson rumbled out of his bushy beard.

"—— his worthless hide! I'll teach him to play hookey and delay my ship!" and again, "I'll break his bloody head when we get to sea!"

A drunken negro, turning out of an alley, lurched heavily against him. Captain O'Halloran's left arm shot out, and the negro, his body spinning like a whirligig, sat down with a grunt on the cobblestones in the middle of the street. Without a glance behind him, O'Halloran stalked on his way.

Presently he opened a swinging latticed door beneath a great yellow globe blackened on one side with smoke. Up a flight of narrow steps he tramped to the bar of the Oriental Club. Young as the night was, the place was already thick with tobacco fumes and rank with the smell of beer. Two bluejackets from the navy-yard were drinking at the bar, while most of the small round tables ranged in two lines in the room were occupied by seedy looking men. The Oriental did a rushing business. A social club in name, it was in reality a "blind tiger," an establishment where liquor was sold to all and sundry in violation of the law and where gambling flourished like the green bay tree. "Honest" Jerry Dargan, whose skilful hand mixed drinks for all who patronized the Oriental, gave hearty welcome to the newcomer.

"Hello, Cap'n Mike!" he cried, his fat

face wreathed in smiles. "How you comin', old socks? Haven't seen you in God knows when."

Captain O'Halloran growled a response that was probably intended to be both affable and courteous.

"Gimme a long un, Jerry," he said, "corn—straight. I'm after that swine, Bill Thompson, mate on my schooner; due to sail to-night—drunk again, —— him! Seen him here?"

Jerry nodded:

"Left here twenty minutes back. Full as a goat. Said he was going to Carson's."

Captain O'Halloran swallowed his corn, drew the back of his hand across his lips, and swore voluminously.

"By the Lord!" croaked a tall, lean man, hurrying toward him from an open doorway at the farther end of the room. "It's O'Halloran of the *James*. Old boy, you've come to the right place. We've got a game in the back room an' you're the very man we want. Poker, me boy—you're a shark at it; an'——" here his voice dropped to a hoarse whisper—"one of the lubbers is runnin' over with money. It's easy meat!"

"And you," said Captain O'Halloran with dignity, shaking hands, "are Captain Lewis of the *Maybelle Sue Maguire*. Sorry, but I'm due to sail to-night an' me mate's on a bat an' I've got to find him. Poker, is it? An' easy meat, is it? Wish I could join you, but I got to find that swine. Poker, you say? I ain't any shark, but I love the game. Lemme see. It's only nine o'clock——"

And Captain O'Halloran suffered himself to be led between the rows of tables to the door that opened into the back room.

III



AT MIDNIGHT the game still proceeded, but the man who had been running over with money was in that condition no longer. Under the odoriferous kerosene lamp that hung above the table had occurred a redistribution of wealth. Captain O'Halloran was in the best of spirits. He had acquired almost all the money of everybody else; and of the three losers only the man who had lost most heavily still smiled at the Captain's jests and applauded his broad humor.

Skipper Lewis of the *Maybelle Sue Maguire*, the poorer by \$24.50 for having

brought his fellow mariner into the game, sipped his beer in silence. Herman Myers, proprietor of the Up-To-Date Grocery, parted by the damnable perversity of the cards from nineteen dollars of his hard-earned cash, opened his thick red lips only when his pent-up emotion called irresistibly for an oath. But Mr. Joseph Dawson of Omaha, who in the course of the evening had seen no fewer than twenty-five of his five-dollar bills take their way to the corner of the table that was Captain O'Halloran's, drank martini's with as keen a relish and sang snatches of unprintable songs in just as mellow a baritone as if he had won instead of lost a hundred and twenty-five dollars.

"He's game," said Captain O'Halloran to himself, "an' considerable drunk." And then aloud, "Partner, you're all right. I like a man who laughs when he's getting licked."

"Thanks," said Mr. Dawson, standing up between deals to stretch his short legs and stroking his straw-colored mustache with a pudgy, much beringed hand. "You see, I don't mind losing that money."

"Plenty more where it came from?"

"I can make some more. Fact is, it was so big a wad it was a nuisance to carry round."

Here was gameness indeed. It warmed Captain O'Halloran's heart; but to Herman Myers, brooding over his losses, it was mid-summer madness and had in it something peculiarly exasperating.

"You talk like a fool," he began, when the door swung open and an old woman shuffled into the room. She stood just within the threshold, bent and wrinkled, her clothes in tatters; and, her lips moving but uttering no sound, she extended toward the players a battered tin cup.

O'Halloran was in a generous mood.

"Why, it's Dumb Kate!" he cried. "Here, old lady, here's a fiver for you."

Herman Myers swung round in his chair.

"Get oudt o' here, you hag!" he screamed. "Ain't I told you a hundred times not to poke your dirty cup at me? You —— nuisance! I dunno why Jerry let's you come roun' here beggin' all de time. Get oudt, get oudt! I got nuttin' for you."

Captain O'Halloran laid his cigar carefully on the edge of the table. He pushed back his chair and arose. Taking from his

pocket another five-dollar bill, he placed it in the tin cup. Then he grasped the old woman gently by the arm.

"Come on, Kate," he said softly.

When he had closed the door behind her, he whirled quickly. Out of his mouth the breath issued with a whistling sound. His face was the color of brick, the veins in his forehead were purple, his teeth gleamed yellow in the midst of the bristling red beard. Almost at a single stride he stood beside Myers's chair, one great hand pressed hard upon the table, the other brandished above the German's flaxen head. When he spoke, the thunder of him filled the little room until the glasses on the table trembled.

"You yaller dog! You hound! To speak like that to a poor old woman! You bloated son of a sausage! I'd knock your insides out if this wasn't Jerry's place. I've got a mind to take you by your dirty collar an' make you beg her pardon. If I only had you on my ship for an hour you'd sweat blood before I got through!"

Myers shrank smaller under the threatening fist, his quivering cheeks grown ashy. His voice was thin and the words came between gasps.

"D'yer know—what she—useter be?"

Captain O'Halloran's veins seemed about to burst. His very eyes appeared to redden. The German thought of death. A tumbler fell into three pieces as the huge fist smashed down upon the table. O'Halloran's fury choked him. A moment he towered in his red wrath, impotent to speak; then, with a "Sufferin' Satan!" he seized his coat and hat and strode to the door. Jerking it open, he turned:

"We're square, ain't we, Dawson? I won your money fairly? So long, then, gentlemen. I play no more with that Dutch hound!"

Outside in the larger room, deserted now save for Jerry snoring vociferously in a corner, he pulled out his watch.

"An' now for Thompson," he muttered.

On the stairs, in the half-light of an oil lamp bracketed to the wall, he met two men coming up. At sight of him they halted, standing squarely on the lower landing, filling the passage.

"How now!" said Captain O'Halloran, his eyes narrowing under their thick brows. A quick glance passed between the two. They stood aside.

"It's all right, sir," said one. "We took you for somebody else."

Captain O'Halloran, passing out into the street, saw that a policeman stood on either side of the Oriental's door. They had heard the colloquy on the stairs and he passed unchallenged.

"Poor Jerry!" he muttered. "Raided again."

IV



A FIVE-MINUTE walk around a corner and down a narrow side street brought him to Carson's. Upon the wooden door, flush with the paving save for a single step of unpainted pine, he hammered loudly with his fist. A light in a down-stairs room went out and a dingy lace curtain at a window fluttered momentarily; but there came no response to his summons. Captain O'Halloran used his fist again, then, after a few moments, employed the toe of his big square boot.

The lights still gleamed up-stairs and a jangling piano still ground out "Casey Jones;" but no one turned the key in the locked door. Captain O'Halloran cursed with deep feeling—cursed the door, cursed the policeman watching him curiously from under the gas-lamp fifty yards up the street, above all cursed Thompson. For an instant he was tempted to use force and he took a step forward to place his shoulder against the panel; but almost simultaneously the policeman also stepped forward, swinging his club, and O'Halloran desisted. He glanced quickly to right and left, and an idea came to him.

Next to Carson's place and close against it stood a three-story brick structure that in the old days had been a handsome residence. One night about a year previous, when Captain O'Halloran had been whiling a giddy hour away in the very place where his first mate now disported, the house had been raided, and the master of the *James T. James*, alone of all who were in it at the time, had eluded the police by passing quietly out of an upper window of the place into an upper window of the old brick mansion. The latter building was empty then; apparently it was empty now. It should be easy to reverse the process and effect an entrance by the same trick which had formerly enabled him to make a successful exit. He would capture the castle by surprise.

He walked slowly along the pavement in front of the brick mansion, noting out of the corner of his eye that the policeman had turned his back and was walking away in the opposite direction. Above, all the shuttered windows were dark. The massive front door at the top of its flight of marble steps was closed and a spider had spun a silken fly-trap about the knob of the old-fashioned bell.

With a quick glance at the departing policeman, O'Halloran wheeled and entered a narrow alley that cut in along the north side of the house. Rats squeaked in front of him as he groped in the darkness, his hand feeling its way along the wall. When the brick ended and a wooden fence took its place, he halted. In another minute he had lifted his great body over the fence and stood in a small cemented court at the back of the deserted house.

Captain O'Halloran had never been troubled with "nerves." Neither was he superstitious; and it is likely that he was as much a stranger to fear of any kind as it is possible for human flesh to be. Nothing tangible, nothing that could be described, took place to disturb him as he stood in the blackness looking at the still blacker pile that loomed before him; but he remembered afterward that just at that moment his muscles had tightened and the sweat on his brow had turned suddenly cold, and it was, therefore, with a step as noiseless as a cat's that he moved forward through the gloom toward the place where, according to his recollection, the back door of the mansion should be.

The last time he had passed through it he had opened it by the simple means of forcing it from its hinges. He expected now to find a new door and to find it locked; and he intended to open it in the same primitive way. He found the door and betrayed at once his lack of training as a house-breaker. So sure was he that it would be locked that he did not stop to test it. Turning the knob, he bore against the panel with all his giant's strength; and as the door, opening inward, swung violently back on its hinges, Captain O'Halloran fell with a mighty thud and a subdued explosion of muttered oaths upon his hands and knees on the floor just within the threshold. Almost instantaneously a great weight dropped upon his back and blow after blow rained down upon his head!

V



IT WAS not often that Michael O'Halloran fought in silence. It was not often, in fact, that he fought at all, for the sight of him was generally enough for any antagonist. But when he did fight, it was usually to the accompaniment of thunderous profanity, each blow driven home with an oath. The fight in the brick mansion was, for a time, a fight without curses or other forms of speech, a fight of beast-like snortings and puffings for breath, a fight of straining, sweat-bathed bodies locked in close embrace, a blind fight fought in a madness of panic.

For this time O'Halloran was afraid—not so much of death as because he could not see the thing he fought. The blackness was like a blanket wrapped about him. It seemed not only to destroy his sight, but also to fetter his arms, to take the strength out of his hands, to befuddle his brain. The perspiration oozed cold from his pores, and terror as much as physical exertion cut his breathing into short gasps. Afterward he found that he could recall few details. The thing had hurled itself upon his back as he knelt on the floor, had showered blows upon his head and neck, had gripped his throat with claws of steel, had sunk teeth into his shoulder like some wild beast. Then came the wave of panic and a blank that memory could never fill.

Evidently, however, he must have fought like a devil, for when his brain began to work properly again he had somehow managed to battle upward to his feet. Now, as he strained this way and that, his quick mind was busy. So absolute was the darkness that still he could not see; but in his brain one conjecture after another took shape, one stratagem after another. Thus, swaying back and forth, breast to breast with his foe, he knew that he was at handgrips with a negro. So much the peculiar odor of the man told him. He knew also that the negro was almost a giant in size and strength; for only twice before had he fought with a human being whom he could not crush breathless in the grip of his hairy arms.

Yet, hard put to it as he was even now, O'Halloran on his feet was a different man from O'Halloran on his hands and knees. After a few moments there remained in him no vestige of fear; and with the panic

out of him, breath returned and the gift of speech. Oaths exploded from his mouth like bombshells. Epithets, born in the gutter and the fo'castle, were spat out from his lips like projectiles from the muzzle of a rapid-fire gun. The eloquence of him was a thing to marvel at, a thing to strike terror, so fierce was it, so unquenchable. Were it possible to record all that he said, the world would have an epic in oburgation.

And presently Captain O'Halloran made an end to the business, spurred thereto by a queer thing that he noticed. He was aware all at once of a lightening of the darkness. A corner of the room, which hitherto had been as black as pitch, assumed suddenly a dim and ghostly luminousness, so that, straining his eyes, he could discern the outline of an open doorway. Some one was coming from beyond that doorway bearing a light, and O'Halloran had no intention of being murdered by two enemies.

For some moments he had felt the negro weakening, and now, jerking his right arm free and tearing his whole body loose from the great naked limbs that had encircled it, he drove his fist forward into the blackness with a deep "Sufferin' Satan!" to speed it on its way. It smashed square against a hard object; and as he wheeled to face the doorway, the floor shook beneath the limp bulk of the negro. Captain O'Halloran, silent again, standing with heaving chest and doubled fists in the center of the room, recoiled three steps when a spectral face as white as a winding-sheet stared at him from the doorway.

VI



A MOMENT it stared, rimmed round with ghostly light; then of a sudden it was gone. The light faded quickly and almost at once the doorway was blotted out. O'Halloran, breathing fast, stood motionless, his long red neck thrust forward as though he were listening keenly for some sound. His tense muscles relaxed as he heard it—a faint *pit, pit, pit*, that presently died away to nothingness. Still he did not move. In a few moments there came another sound easily recognizable—the almost inaudible snap of the latch on a door. O'Halloran slapped his thigh and smiled a trifle wryly.

"A woman, by cricky!" he muttered. "Ghosts don't make a noise when they run

up-stairs, and generally they go right through doors without botherin' to open an' shut 'em. Now what in — is a woman doin' in this house?"

He asked himself the question again as he struck a match and bent over the great black human hulk sprawling on the floor. "A woman—a white woman up yonder in the dark—in this empty house—with this wild beast down here!"

He prodded the negro with his foot.

"Gad, what a whale! Two hundred and forty pounds, I guess, an' mostly muscle. Well, he won't wake up for an hour. That lick took him square on the forehead."

The match burned out and he stood erect in the blackness. He pondered a moment, then groped toward the open door leading to the yard. He found his coat and hat where they had dropped on the floor when he fell and he put the coat on over the tattered remnants of his shirt. It was too late now to continue the quest for Thompson. He would go back to the schooner and upsail without his mate. Suddenly a thought came to him and he halted.

"Sufferin' Satan!" he said slowly, repeating the words four times. His great hand tugged at his beard. He turned and tiptoed to the door through which the ghostly face had looked at him.

It had been said of Captain O'Halloran by one who knew him well that he was as hard as a nail and as soft as a lump of wax. He had been known to hammer an obstreperous seaman almost to a jelly and then to keep him in irons two days in a schooner's dismal hold though the man was fit candidate for a hospital; and he had been known to leap into the Hudson on an icy morning in March to save a lady's pug. Morals he had none; he had not been in a church in fifteen years; he broke, habitually, a majority of the ten commandments and would have continued to break them though all the clergymen in Christendom had taken him in hand. Yet he had never cheated at cards or broken a promise or said behind a man's back anything that he would not have said to his face; and it is even true that he was not without some of the positive and rarer virtues.

It is reported that he wept when a cat that he had owned for six years was injured and died in agony; and it is known that regularly each month thereafter he sent five dollars to a certain hospital for sick and

crippled animals. It is therefore not easy to surmise what it was that caused O'Halloran to pause in the black room where he had done battle with the negro and think of the woman up-stairs; or to say with certainty what motive sent him tiptoeing up the long steps through the gloom of the silent house to see the end of an adventure that had begun perilously enough.

He heard no sound as he passed up the stairs save the slight noise of his own going. This was as little as he could contrive to make it; yet he knew that in the empty house the creaking of his brine-stiffened shoes was audible from cellar to garret. He held a match in his fingers, but did not strike it; and in the blackness he had to test each step with his toe to learn whether he had gained the second story. At the landing he halted. It was a large house with many rooms, and he had no way of knowing in which one of these the white-faced woman waited. Yet—for he judged that in her retreat she would have fled as far as possible—he had it already settled in his mind that she was somewhere on the third floor.

The creaking of his shoes as he put himself in motion again, feeling his way along the hall by means of the wooden balustrade, moved him to silent curses. Certainly, if it should prove that the negro was not the only Cerberus with whom he must deal, he could not hope to take the other by surprise. A man—or a woman—standing at the top of the second flight of stairs could not fail to blow a hole through him by firing at the sound. Nevertheless, O'Halloran began without another pause the ascent of the second flight.

His foot was on the upper landing when he stopped short. To the left of him the darkness had been cloven as if by a thin rapier of light. He looked at it puzzled, his head cocked on one side. It was, of course, the crack under a closed door at the end of the hall; and in the room to which the door gave entrance some one had lighted a lamp or gas-jet or turned the button of an electric bulb. But why? Why had the mysterious inhabitant of the silent house, after showing so unmistakable a desire to avoid an encounter, thus at the last betrayed the hiding-place?

Captain O'Halloran dismissed the problem after brief consideration. Action was his forte; he was not one to bother his

brain with hypothesis or speculation. At any rate, the quarry had now been run to earth. Whether it was a tiger crouched for the spring or a gazelle cowering in terror, another moment would show. Striding forward with a tread that shook the flooring, searching for and instantly finding the knob, he flung the door violently open and stalked boldly into the room.

It was a large room, high-ceilinged, papered in light blue. Cobwebs, laden with dust, trailed from all four corners. On the floor, nearly in the center, burned a small oil lamp. The shutters of the two windows and a door, leading evidently to another room, were closed. The air hung heavily and bore a musty odor. Save for a single piece, there was no furniture in the room. This was an ancient and ragged leather lounge against the opposite wall. And on the lounge reclined a woman!

VII



SHE smiled upon the intruder and gave him welcome in a voice as clear as silver. The pink-flowered kimono

that she wore clung loosely about her form, and though she lay motionless, she seemed instinct with grace. Her bare round arm was very white; the tiny hand upon which her head was pillowed was half hidden in a great mass of wavy chestnut hair; a flush of rose tinted her smooth cheeks; her eyes were big and brown; her lips red and ripe. So she rested lightly on her couch, young and richly beautiful and, to all outward seeming, utterly unperturbed, apparently as calm and confident as some great lady of the golden age of France giving audience in her boudoir to those who sought her favors. For full thirty seconds Captain O'Halloran stood with his mouth agape before amazement gave place to action and he realized that he remained with his head covered before a lady.

As he bowed low and hurriedly buttoned his coat more tightly about the tattered shirt, she spoke again, her eyes opening wider. This time there was a tremor in the silvery voice as of agitation with difficulty held in check.

"You frightened me," she said, "but now I see that you are a gentleman. Tell me the truth. You will not harm me, will you?"

"Madam," said the Captain, "my name

is Michael O'Halloran, master of the schooner *James T. James*. I never harmed a woman in my life."

The words were courteously said, but they wrought a startling thing. With a flash of pink silk stockings under the kimono, the lady rose. Laughing shrilly with head thrown back, she stood beside the couch. Then she swayed from side to side, grew pale, staggered forward and in an instant was hanging limp in Captain O'Halloran's arms.

When he laid her on the lounge and fanned her with his hat, the big eyes opened slowly and the curved lips parted in a smile.

"Thank God!" she whispered, "Thank God! I'm saved!" Then, after a pause and in a clearer, stronger voice, "I'm so glad! I fainted, I suppose——"

O'Halloran, kneeling beside her, nodded. "Only for a minute," he said. "And now tell me——"

"Yes, yes," she broke in, sitting bolt upright. "We must hurry; he may come back." The white hands trembled now as they pushed back the chestnut hair and the voice quivered with excitement. "Get me out of here, sir. Get me out before he comes!"

Suddenly she shrank back, deadly pale again as if struck with terror.

"You'll believe me, won't you?" she whispered, her hands clasped as if in prayer, her large eyes gazing into his. "You'll help me escape? You won't let them have me?"

Something rose in O'Halloran's throat and impeded his speech. His red face grew redder yet; his heart beat violently. In a moment he had seized a tiny hand and pressed it to his lips.

"By God!" he roared, "they'll have to kill me first!"

The white hand rested in his leathery palm a full half-minute before it was withdrawn; the big eyes, modestly downcast, gleamed under their silky lashes as though wet with tears; the rose tint of the cheeks had deepened to a blush. Now and again the red lips trembled piteously as she told her story; and at the end, the voice quavered and broke. Before he guessed her purpose she was on her knees.

"Oh, take me away!" she sobbed, her eyes brimming over, both her hands clasping one of his. "Take me to the station and put me on the train for home!"



O'HALLORAN was drunk—not with the bad beer of the Oriental Club, but with an intoxicant far more powerful. A sort of madness of chivalry possessed him, and a madness of anger. He would have fought a hundred men had they come upon him then to harm this woman. He did not kiss the face so temptingly upturned nor crush the heaving bosom to his; but for an instant he was very near to doing both. When she had gone into the next room to put on her skirt, he strode swiftly up and down the floor, his huge hands opening and shutting convulsively, his eyes blazing, his beard-rimmed face crimson.

What a devilish plot was this! He saw it all as clear as crystal—he who knew so well the wickedness of men. It was the old story: an innocent country girl and a smooth-spoken stranger, an elopement from her father's farm, a journey by train to the city; then, in the dusk, he had brought her to the empty mansion, which he declared was a boarding-house so full of guests that she was assigned to a pair of incompletely furnished rooms, and had left her there, promising that in the morning he would return and they would be married; and she, her suspicions aroused just after his departure, had found herself a prisoner, the only exit guarded by a huge and uncouth negro.

O'Halloran had no difficulty in conjecturing what the next chapter of the story would have been had he not so strangely been injected into the plot. How lucky he had come in the nick of time to foil the villain! He would track him down next day—but no, he must sail with the last of the ebb and would not even have leisure to give the facts to the police. The fury of him bubbled out of his mouth in half-smothered mutterings. And what a girl—not a girl, but a woman full-blown and beautiful! And the gratitude in her dark eyes as they gazed into his! And the softness of her hand as it pressed his hand! Ah, if he should dare——

The door between the two rooms opened and she entered smiling, in white shirt-waist, black skirt and a jaunty hat with a red feather.

The negro still lay motionless on the floor down-stairs as they passed out of the back door in the darkness. She led the way to a gate in the fence; and dawn was just breaking when, after walking several streets,

deserted save for a few colored men going to their work, O'Halloran hailed a rickety hack and told the driver, "Union Station."

Of what words passed between them during that drive in the gray morning, O'Halloran remembers little. He knows, however, that a soft hand somehow found its way into his before the hack had clattered the length of a single block; and that when the bony horse stopped and the dusky jehu up in front announced in purest gullah, "Hyuh we is, suh. Yuh got five minnit to git yuh ticket," the chestnut head was pillowed snugly on his shoulder and wisps of silky hair were tangled in his beard. And he knows that five minutes afterward, as the long train drew out of the shed, he was oppressed with a sudden loneliness standing there on the platform and that he took from his pocket a slip of blue paper on which she had scribbled something just before the conductor had shouted "All aboard!"

TO MY HERO AND MY PRESERVER: Unless it is your desire, you will never see me again. But I shall wait with a heart full of hope; and perhaps you will come, when you are ready, to the house of Abner Gray on the old turnpike road at Maryville.

DORIS GRAY.

VIII

 TO CAPTAIN MICHAEL O'HALLORAN, sitting at ease by the rail of the schooner *James T. James*, snug in her berth at Baltimore, came a loose-limbed mulatto youth whose face twitched and whose hands trembled as he shambled forward along the deck. In his arms he bore a bundle of newspapers; and these, with a watchful eye on the Captain's feet cocked up against the rail, he placed on the deck beside the chair. Then he withdrew discreetly.

Presently Captain O'Halloran, rousing from his reverie, reached down and picked up the bundle. It was his habit at the end of each cruise to send his boy ashore for newspapers covering the period of the voyage; and these he would peruse with great care and in proper order; for he was a lover of the literature of murder and divorce and was also keenly interested in the fortunes of certain pugilists and certain aggregations of baseball players.

Therefore he glanced through the papers

in his hand and chose for immediate attention the issue of earliest date, the afternoon of August 3, the day on which the *James T. James* had sailed out of Kingshaven. Captain O'Halloran was about to turn at once to the sporting news when a headline on the first page caught his eye:

NOTED COUNTERFEITERS CAUGHT AT LAST BUCK MCCARTHY'S GANG NABBED AT KINGSHAVEN

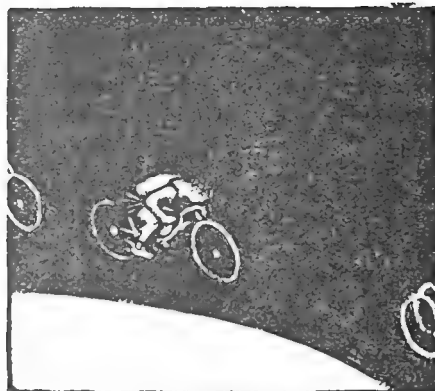
KINGSHAVEN, Aug. 3. "Buck" McCarthy, "Red" Mosely, Jim Martin and Sam Preston, members of a counterfeiting gang that for more than six months has been operating in this country and in Mexico, are in jail here to-day, following their arrest last night and early this morning by agents of the United States Government. Martin and Mosely were arrested on the streets late last night. McCarthy, the leader of the gang, was captured shortly after midnight at a notorious drinking and gambling resort.

He was seated at a table playing poker when the officers entered the room. A few fake five dollar bills were found on him, but he stated, and his statement was corroborated by two other men sitting in the game, that he had lost about \$125 to a man who only a few minutes before had left the place, following an altercation. McCarthy admitted that all this money was counterfeit.

McCarthy's nerve broke down under pressure, and at daybreak he led the officers to a house which had been headquarters for the gang for three days and in which he declared Leila McBryde, a woman accomplice who is said to be his wife and who is regarded by the police as the cleverest member of the gang, and Preston, who is a negro, would be found. The negro, a giant in stature, was discovered sitting on the floor of a down-stairs room in a dazed condition, with his shirt torn to shreds and an ugly lump on his forehead. The house was searched, but no trace of the woman could be found. Her disappearance seemed to amaze both McCarthy and Preston. The latter explained his battered condition by stating that in the middle of the night a man had entered the house and that the last thing he remembered was a desperate fight in the darkness with the intruder. He believes that he was knocked senseless in the fight and said that he had just recovered consciousness when the officers and McCarthy arrived. The vanishing of Leila McBryde and the identity of the midnight intruder who entered the house and assaulted Preston remain equally mysterious.

Captain O'Halloran read every word of the story twice. Then he kicked the rest of the papers overboard and went to his cabin. There he drank two glasses of corn whisky and burned a handful of five-dollar bills in the stove. He started to apply a match to a little slip of blue paper with a few sentences scrawled on it in pencil, but changed his mind and locked up the slip of paper in his strong box.

The Grind



Francis William Sullivan

JUST as the yellow lights winked on to take up the burden of the faltering sunlight, something happened in the banked oval.

A long, lithe man in black tights and blue jersey, with a cap to match from which floated dainty streamers, bent low over his handle-bars. The bunch were just completing the length of the Twenty-seventh Street side of Madison Square Garden, and the precipitous wall of the Madison Avenue turn presented itself. The man, riding among the tail-enders, shot high upon the steep bank, then, with the muscles of his steeled legs thrusting like the pistons of an engine, he shot down the incline and along the Twenty-sixth Street side.

He had barely passed Von Vosburgh of the Dutch-Belgian team and Guffano of the Italian team when a shrill voice from somewhere above pierced his ears.

"Wheel! Yow! Oh, you Bender! Go it, old boy!"

Then the words were lost in the roaring of a mighty Niagara of sound that poured from its balconied cliffs into the whirling arena below.

"— it, if that fool had only kept his mouth shut!" snarled Bender between his clenched teeth, "I could have got a half a lap on the bunch easy."

With a magnificent burst of speed he shot to the fore of the racing riders and drew away from them gradually, a blue and black comet with a straggling, many-hued tail.

But now the tail refused to be left. The

best bicycle riders in the world bent across their handle-bars, their eyes glued to a three-inch black mark that flowed beneath their wheels. One eye was on the mark, the other on the gray blur of the rear tire ahead, every sense was alert for the crash that might spell disaster and injury; and yet every muscle in the body propelled that body and its vehicle about the polished saucer at fifty miles an hour.

The Niagara of noise splashed all about them with greater volume, dashed itself back and forth, echoing and reëchoing, convulsed into a maelstrom of meaningless sound. For Harry Bender kept his lead, yes, and even drew away slightly.

"Chee! Look at that blond gink ride!" screamed the Bowery representative who had been critical and undisturbed in the same seat since the race started on Sunday night, forty hours before. "Me fer him! He's a wonder. Oh, you devil! Go it!"

"Ach Gott! Wagner, where are you? Gome! Donner! Are you anchored yet?" bellowed Germany to the unfortunate representative of the Franco-German team who had commenced to slip back like a stray meteorite from the comet-tail before mentioned.

"Ah! Guffano! Viva Guffano e Italia! Bravo!" shrieked the volatile countrymen of the low-browed, thick-set rider who seemed on the point of dropping into the ruck in company with Wagner.

With eyes never faltering, shoulders rigid, and every ounce of strength going into the down-thrusts of his legs, Harry Bender spun

around the track. By the yelling he knew he had achieved some considerable advantage. As he passed his camp on the Twenty-seventh Street side he looked for his partner, Danny Moffat, but the camp was empty. In a flash the other camps flew by, and before each, crouched upon a glistening machine, sat the riders ready to go to the relief of their partners.

Now the frantic band, led by a stout man who watched the race instead of his music, struck into the bedlam that possessed the Garden. The very sound of the brass instruments seemed to galvanize the riders. Harry Bender had a quarter of a lap on the field, but he no longer gained. From the Twenty-seventh Street side new riders shot forth to replace the old, rode five or six laps at terrific speed, and retired. The first men, refreshed, sprinted their half-mile and handed the task to their comrades.

 AS THE tide reaches toward the high-water mark in a series of rushes, so did the first of the field draw up on Harry Bender, fighting alone for the hard-won advantage he had gained. At each relief, his lead diminished and still there was no blue-jerseyed Danny Moffat to shoot past with a yell and take up the grueling work.

"Where is he?" groaned Harry to himself.

He knew that something must have happened, for Danny and he were fast friends and inseparable pals. This was their first six-day race and they had combined and entered under the appealing title of "the Office-Boy Team." Faith and youth and energy and inexperience, coupled with considerable amateur riding, were their chief assets. Something must have happened, he knew, to keep Danny out of this scrimmage with their team a quarter-lap to the good.

A terrific yell shook the Garden, for the front wheel of the first pursuer was at Harry Bender's rear tire! Men smashed one another's derbies, shrieked themselves hoarse, threw papers and sandwiches into the air, and leaped upon the seats to see better. On the oasis of floor about which the oval was built the band seemed about to have apoplexy, but not a note could be heard. In another corner of the same oasis the man who aims long loops of candy at a butcher's hook ceased trying to interest a few thousand

maniacs. The press enclosure at the Fourth Avenue end showed signs of life where before it had been almost empty.

"They've got him! They've got him!" yelled the crowd in a dozen languages, while each of the scorers at the corners of the track kept his eye glued on the team that was his to watch, and forgot the noise and excitement in the task of checking bewildering laps correctly.

Harry Bender did not know what the pandemonium signified. He only realized that his legs were failing him and becoming heavier, that despite the commands of his will, the springs that drove him had lost their resilience, that he was losing ground.

A despairing look at his empty camp showed no signs of life. Probably all the trainers were down-stairs whipping Danny into shape for some sort of relief. His eye flashed back to the dirty, yellow boards and the endless black ribbon, and then became aware of something slowly appearing to his right. A grim, bent head came, then crooked arms, a rigid body, and a tangle of white legs. The hum of whirring spokes sounded dimly in his ear.

He recognized the white legs. Frank Sturtevant, the "war-horse" of the game and many time winner of the Garden races, had passed him. Then, as the maddening ache grew in his legs, other men, silent, grim, inexorable, went slowly by at the tail of their leader.

"Oh, God, where is Danny?" he almost sobbed.

Now ten men had gone by and he found himself riding alone, but slowly going back from the man ahead of him. His front wheel wobbled, but he recovered himself dizzily. Then, slowly, three other riders passed him—the second bunch, the weaker men—and he found himself alone at the very end of the procession.

High up on the bank the leaders rode, cleaving the smoky air like the prow of an ocean liner, and sending to the left near the bottom a scattered spray of wearied relief riders.

With the last ounce of his failing strength Bender tacked on to the rear wheel of Gufano, whose yellow-and-green striped jersey commenced to grow misty in front of him. All sound faded from his hearing and all sight except the blur of yellow and green.

And now fear gripped at his heart. Inexperience had led him to continue the mad

sprint without the prospect of relief, and now he was to pay dearly for that inexperience. He knew the purpose of Sturtevant and those other leaders. As yet no team had been lapped in the race. Instantly they had discerned that something had happened to Danny Moffat, and with the cruelty of a wolf-pack they had resolved to put him out of the running, as well as the weaker riders, if they could.

Bender did not know the fact, but Sturtevant, riding ferociously now, entered each straightaway just as the blue jersey left it. A third of a lap was all that separated the leader and the tail-ender. The crowd, almost hysterical, forced cracked yells through its raw throats and leaned far over the railings, eyes bulging.



SUDDENLY Bender became aware that Guffano the Italian had turned an ugly and convulsed face back at him for a second, and even in his misery Bender knew the expression to be one of rage rather than physical exhaustion. The apparition cleared Bender's brain and he watched the other.

Guffano bent his back, drove into his pedals, seemingly with a last effort, and launched his front tire obliquely against the rear wheel of the man in front of him. The crash that followed shut the roars of the crowd into silence. Bender, with the lightning instinct of the trained rider, swerved sharply to the right and shot past the tangle of bicycle and man that slid banging in an oblique course into the pit.

The bell on the judge's stand clanged swiftly five times and the exhausted riders relaxed their efforts; the imprecations of the leaders joining those of the disappointed crowd, for now no lap could be gained.

Bender, suffering the anguish of suddenly relaxed muscles, still rode behind Guffano who had cleverly avoided the wreck he had caused. The Italian once more turned about and looked at Bender; and this time there was a vindictive grin of triumph on his face. Then he understood what had occurred, and rage against the crooked rider welled up in his tired body.

A minute later Danny Moffat, rather white and scared-looking, rode alongside and put his hand hesitatingly on his partner's shoulder.

"I'm awfully sorry, Harry," he said simply, "but my heart went back on me and

they wouldn't let me come up till just now."

"That's all right," said Harry wearily. "I knew it must be something like that, but they pretty near got us."

"How'd it happen?"

"That ugly wop dumped Billy Sparks of the Australian team. I saw him do it, too, and it was the dirtiest trick ever worked."

Danny Moffat looked at his partner in amazement.

"And you're kickin' about that? You must be crazy, man. Where would we be if he hadn't?"

"Well, I guess I'll turn in for a while, I'm nearly dead," remarked Bender after a pregnant pause, and he rode slowly down to the edge of the track.

CHAPTER II

THE COGS BEGIN TO TURN

THE trainers unstrapped his toes and pried him off the saddle that it seemed he had almost taken as a part of his being. He stretched his arms weakly and walked a few awkward, stiff paces, resembling nothing so much as a swift wild duck forced to travel on the earth.

He strained wearily to his bunk, when a hand was laid on his. He turned and looked into the kindly, gaunt face of Frank Sturtevant, the man who had so nearly put him out of the running. They were old friends, these two; in fact, Sturtevant had taught Harry to ride and finally urged his leaving the amateur ranks for the professional in the present race.

"Crawl in. I'll sit on the edge and talk to you a few minutes," said Sturtevant, as he saw a trainer approaching with a tin cylinder of nourishment. The boy obeyed, and Sturtevant, perching himself on the bunk, went on,

"Look here, Harry, what did you go and make a fool of yourself for then? Haven't I told you often enough to lay back and watch the older riders? You never catch me doing anything like that, do you?"

"No," said Bender. "I suppose I was a fool, all right, but I thought I'd like to try my speed against the field—just for future reference. I might need it, later on."

The kindly, wide mouth of Sturtevant relaxed into a loose grin and he scratched his head.

"Thinkin' of the final mile between survivors, are you?"

"Yep," said the boy confidently, "and I feel fine."

"How's the liver working?"

"Been pretty bad, but it's better now. My hands are what bother me most after a long trick, and my wrists."

"Well, Harry, if you get through Wednesday midnight, you can think about Saturday. How is Danny? Is he pulling with you all right?"

"Yes, except I'm afraid his heart is bum," said the boy, his face clouding. "If he ever leaves me in the lurch again like he did today we'll lose out sure. But say, Frank, you didn't lose any time trying to hand it to me, did you?"

"I did not, my son. This isn't a pink tea nor yet a touring club; it's six-day bicycle riding, and when I'm on the track I'd grind down my own father. But I'd buy him a drink when it was all over. You're young, boy, and I'll tell you now, beforehand, so it won't hurt so much later, that you're not going to win!"

Harry Bender flushed. The new strength that the concentrated nourishment gave him was coursing through his veins to his weary muscles; already he felt fit to go back to the grind that whirled steadily past his camp every third of a minute.

"Who'll beat me?" he asked truculently.

"Barring accidents, I will, for one," was the cool reply accompanied by a steady, friendly gaze. "Don't get sore, Harry, because I tell you this, and don't break your heart if it comes true; I'm the best friend you've got in the world as far as this business goes, but I know what I'm talking about, and you don't."

"But I'm faster than you are," cried the youth. "Remember that special mile on the Velodrome last Summer? I beat off your jump and was going away at the end. Remember?"

A sort of shadow dropped for the moment over the older man's face. That had been his first defeat in ten years; he had a wife and three children, and he was absolutely incompetent at anything else but bicycle riding. Was it the first warning of the end? The shadow cleared to a patient smile.

"Yes, but you forget something, Harry," he said. "You aren't the only man in the world faster than I am in actual time, but you will notice I win ninety per cent. of

the races I enter. The sprint isn't all."

"Age and experience, you mean," said the boy, "and—and tricks of the trade."

"Yes," replied his vis-à-vis, "honest tricks of the trade. People say it can't be done, but I have been at the top of the heap for ten years and never done a crooked thing in all that time."

"And the whole world knows it!" cried Bender enthusiastically. Then, suddenly, the memory of Guffano returned to him, and his young, flushed face scowled.

"Say, Frank, do you know what saved me from losing a lap just now?"

"Sparks's spill, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but do you know how it came about?"

"No."

"Guffano deliberately collided with Sparks. I saw him do it. Do you think I ought to complain to the judges? Evidently they didn't see him do it."

Sturtevant suddenly laughed a bitter laugh and pounded his knee half-despairingly.

"So that was it? I suspected as much. He did that when he knew I would lap him. If it had been the Frenchman or yourself or Van Vosburgh leading the sprint do you suppose he would have done the trick? Not much! They're laying for me this year and they're going to get me just because I've won three times out of four entries. Why, boy, if I hadn't jumped in to lead that sprint when I saw you in a hole, do you think they would have kept after you? No! Of course they wouldn't have let you get a lap, but they wouldn't have taken advantage of your disadvantage. The only sprinting they care about is that of Sturtevant and Newell. You wait and see if I'm not right. If they can put us out by one means or another, they will!"

"But how about that complaint to the judges?"

"I wouldn't do it, my boy. This is your first ride, and I wouldn't get to be known as a kicker already; it looks bad in a young fellow. Besides, there's nobody's word but your own and that won't go far; Sparks can't prove anything. Last of all, Guffano's bound to get his anyway. I've always thought he was a crook and now I know it, but I'll get even with him square. He can be ridden off his legs in the next twelve hours, and once he starts back he'll probably quit. I know the breed."

"The management may pay him something to stay out front and keep up the pace, but he won't see any prize money, and he'll hardly dare go back to Italy where he's quite some idol. No, Harry, Brother Guffano is doomed. Say, boy, better get up, I guess. There sits the Frenchy singin' that infernal song of his, and that always means a sprint. So long!"



STURTEVANT walked swiftly down to his own camp and squatted on his bunk to watch developments. Bender swung his recently rubbed legs out and looked around. Above him the crowd in shirt-sleeves and tobacco-smoke was growling discontentedly at the slow pace and trying to make an evening meal of ham sandwiches and bottled beer. A fight started in the top gallery and instantly every one on that level was craning and roaring. A gray-clad policeman disappeared with both combatants, and was greeted on each floor of his descent by jeers and gutter-wit.

The next camp to Bender and Moffat's was that occupied by the French-German combination. Just now Henri St. Beauve sat on his machine supported by a trainer and expressed his unfailing cheerfulness in a sort of rollicking battle-song:

*"Au clair de la lune
Mon ami Pierrot,
Prête-moi la plume
Pour écrire un mot."*

"*Tiens!* They stand still, these squirrels in their cage. They go to sleep riding. La, la! One good push, Jean, so. Now we will ride!"

Slowly he went around the flat enclosure, then swung up on the banked track, and presently relieved his partner, the maligned Wagner. A few moments later he sped to the fore and set a scorching pace.

It was just before daybreak, when Harry Bender had gone down-stairs for a good meal, that a man in citizen's clothes approached him. The boy recognized the fellow as Guffano's manager.

"You are a good rider, Mr. Bender," said the stranger affably, in accented English. "Your wonderful sprint is in all the papers. You would like to win, I suppose?"

"Sure I would," replied the boy with his mouth full of juicy steak.

"Yes, but nobody can win this race with

that — long-legged Sturtevant riding."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I mean. Suppose there is a hard sprint led by you when Sturtevant or Newell is riding. Suppose either of them has dropped back from setting the pace. Suppose six men pocket Sturtevant or Newell and let the leaders get a lap—six men who could not win anyway. Then, ha!" he made a comprehensive gesture—"then Sturtevant is a lap behind and can not catch the leaders again. It is very easy."

"So you want me to join the combination against Sturtevant?"

"If you think that is what I mean, perhaps it is so."

"You go to the devil with your combination!" said Bender crisply. "I won't join it, and I don't want to hear anything about it."

"For such talk perhaps you lose the race yourself, maybe," returned the man with a leer.

Bender felt the blood leave his face. He felt tired, exhausted. He would have given his soul for eight hours' sound sleep. This was the Wednesday of which Sturtevant—good, fatherly old Sturtevant—had warned him. The man's implication was plain enough. The combination would get rid of him along with his friend.

Fear of his own youth and inexperience assailed him. He would be easy prey to these hardened old rascals of the riding game should they mark him for their spite. And it was his first race. He wanted to do well, he knew he was a good rider; the trick proposed was not really crooked. He knew that Danny Moffat would greet the opportunity with joy, but Danny had not been trained for the arena, body and mind, by "war-horse" Sturtevant, as had he.

He had given up his "office-boy" job to go into this event. A good showing meant so much—perhaps even a trip to Europe for the Berlin race that was the next big event.

Suddenly a mighty roar and stamping of feet brought him erect before he could reply. One of his trainers rushed in bellowing the news of a sprint, and before Bender could give answer he was running up the steps to the track in his familiar red and blue bath-robe.

The field whizzed by with St. Beauve in the lead twenty-five yards to the good. Next, with his nose down, like a dog on a

hot trail and leading the others, was Frank Sturtevant. Bender skipped down the track, heaving a sigh of relief.

A moment later he sat erect on his wheel supported by one man, while another buckled his toes into the clips. Then, when the field had hummed by, a strong shove sent him with crying muscles into the human whirlpool, the momentous question undecided!

CHAPTER III

DANNY MOFFAT'S SISTER

HARRY BENDER, crouching on the edge of his bunk with his splitting head in his hands, finally leaned back clasping his knees, in a vain attempt to ease himself of the agony that possessed his whole body.

"Where'll I rub?" asked the trainer anxiously, noting the drawn features of the boy, and his distracted eye.

"You can rub your hands off, Bill," was the dull reply, "but you'll never find the tiredness that's got me now. It's way inside every muscle and every bone. It's in my marrow. Gee! I wish this crowd would keep quiet so I could get a little rest. I'll go nutty yet."

"Well, Harry, I warned you against ridin' so hard all day," said the other reproachfully. "What made you do it?"

"Frank Sturtevant told me I would have to reach a crisis when I thought I was goin' to die before I would be any good in this race, and said I might as well ride a good pace as a poor one; it would bring on the crisis sooner. I took his word for it."

"Well, you poor — fool," remarked the trainer comfortingly, "don't you know any more than to take the advice of another rider in this race? Sturty is all right—squarest man that ever lived and all that, but he's riding for his bread and butter, and there's more ways than mere speed to get rid of another team."

"Oh, shut up, Bill," growled the boy dully, "Sturty wouldn't steer me wrong on purpose; he's the best friend I've got in this business."

"All right, Harry, all *right*," cried the trainer cheerfully and soothingly. "Now you lie down a bit and I'll make those lead legs of yours feel like new. And maybe you can get a nap. The field's half asleep, and

Danny is the worst of the lot. He'll fall off, the first thing you know. They're still ten miles ahead of the record, although they've been loafing for an hour. That's what your riding to-day did for 'em, old boy. Why, you ought to see the evening papers—your name in black headlines, your picture in the middle of the page, and a long piece about the way you sent the Australian team and the Dutch-Belgian combination down and out. Only twelve in it now, Harry, and they're going to drop like ripe apples from now on."

The trainer deftly turned Bender around and, keeping up a flow of interesting comment, persuaded him, without the least show of intending to do so, to stretch out on his hard bunk.

"I'm overripe; I'm rotten!" muttered the boy thickly, but the rubber paid no heed.

He went on with his gentle loosening of almost paralyzed muscles. Suddenly there was a jerk, and the limb under his hands doubled up convulsively while Harry writhed and grunted his agony. Cramps in thigh and calf had set their cruel grips together and their victim nearly fainted with pain. A strenuous half-minute's work and the limb was straight again, more comfortable than it had been.

Bender lay back, exhausted, and tried to sleep. He needed sleep; his body seemed to him to lie gasping for sleep with a hundred thirsty mouths, and yet his brain raced round and round. Forgotten noises dinned in his ears; spasmodic memories of the sprints set his scarcely controllable legs to kicking violently; the lights constantly glared in his smoke-reddened eyes. In despair of sleep, he pushed aside the curtains of his bunk and looked up at the crowd from where he lay.

It was about eight o'clock and the Garden was jammed. Three great billows of human faces seethed above him, each ready to break into thunder at an appropriate signal. His weary eye slowly traveled down to the boxes. He liked the boxes; the stout sports in dinner jackets, side-set derbies and fat, fragrant cigars interested him. If he won, he would at once become a consideration in their world.

Suddenly he blinked his eyes. Then he looked again. There was a box just opposite to him, in which sat a female of the species with her less deadly escort. This in itself was interesting and unusual, for

women at the Garden races have always been scarce. He could not see her very distinctly through the smoke and because her head was turned away for the moment, but he decidedly liked her hat. Presently she turned her full face directly toward him and he almost jumped with surprise.

It was Martha Moffat, Danny's sister. Harry immediately, with a strong fling of the curtains, cast his legs and the busy trainer into complete darkness—so strange are the workings of the human mind. For almost three days now he had slept and eaten and been partially rubbed in the full gaze of thousands of people he did not know—and without a qualm. Now, as soon as a certain Being put in her appearance, he was like to die with the exposure of his shapely calves.



MARTHA MOFFAT, Danny's sister, was one of the twenty thousand mortals in New York, the Bronx and environs, who would sooner see a six-day bicycle race than eat, and her father, the man with her, was one of the equally numerous who would rather eat than see anything whatever race under any possible circumstances. This accounted for her not having been in attendance regularly before. She had to stay home and cook, although Danny, her cherished brother, was still numbered among the leaders and had a fighting chance to win. Her mother was dead.

Her father, aside from his other peculiarities, was not proud of the profession his son had chosen. Danny, at fourteen, had entered a lawyer's office at four dollars a week, and the stern parent saw visions of an ultimate barrister, District Attorney, Attorney General and Supreme Court judge for a month afterward. That was as long as Danny held the job.

Harry Bender had become acquainted with Danny in his office-boy days and, consequently, with his sister. Now, at twenty, the allegiance that he had sworn to her then remained green and fresh in his heart. Not that he had any idea of marrying or asking in marriage—he was wise enough to know that passion would not support them very long in this day of golden eggs and the treasure-trove of the butcher.

But now, as he grinned gladly in response to the violent bobbing of the pinless blue polo hat, a mad, uplifting thought came to him. If he and Danny should win, or even

get second or third money, he would have some reason to believe that his impossible dream might come within the realm of human computation. For a time he even forgot the leaden torture of his legs in the contemplation of this sudden inspiration. Once he had a good reputation there were numberless Summer meets with fat prizes, some of which he knew he could pull down; for he was really a fine sprinter at short distances.

"Say, Harry," remarked Bill, the trainer, who had continued stolidly to rub and massage in the dark, "you've made an awful hit with the crowd in this race. Did you hear them yell and clap every time you came on the track to-day?"

"No. Did they, Bill?" he lied self-consciously.

"Sure. If you and Danny could get inside the money you'll get an awful hand. But you got to quit ridin' your head off or you won't be anywhere."

From some high point in the gallery a shrill, penetrating yell swooped down:

"Oh, you Danny! Go it! Go it! Oh, my Gawd, look at him go!"

The next instant the billows of humanity broke with a roar of sound into the bowl of the arena, and the next there was a swift hum, a streak of blue jersey, and Danny whizzed by a dozen wheel-lengths in advance of the field. Bill shot back the curtains of the bunk and swung the legs he had been rubbing out over the edge.

"Come on, boy, get on to your wheel!" he commanded.

Gone now was the face of Martha Moffat, gone everything but the need of the moment and the sinking realization that he was unfit to meet it. His knees shook under him weakly as he stood up; every ounce of energy seemed to have leaked out through his feet into the floor; the dull ache of utter weariness seemed to make every muscle a hundred-weight. The color in his cheeks was hectic, his eyes were unnaturally bright as though with fever, and his tumbled golden hair made Martha declare to herself that never had she seen him look so handsome. Exhaustion had claimed him.

He wobbled uncertainly to the machine that Bill held for him and, with anguish, swung one leaden leg over the saddle. Then, with a defiant toss of the head, he gritted his teeth and took in the situation, and this time his heart sank like a plummet

and a feeling of nausea gripped his stomach.

Barely three laps of the sprint had been ridden, but the field was already divided into two sections. In front rode seven men, behind trailed five more, and the last of these was Frank Sturtevant, his face livid with passion as he tried time and again to break through the cordon that had pocketed him! The men that composed this barrier were Von Vosburgh and Sparks, whose teams had already dropped far behind, Guffano, who with his partner had only been able to hang with the field through the most terrible exertion, and an American who had entered the contest in imperfect physical condition.

Then Bender took in the whole situation.

The Bender-Moffat team had become popular with the crowd. No doubt Guffano's manager had approached Danny Moffat and proposed to him the scheme that Bender had turned down. Danny, without the fine sense of honor that had carried Bender through the race so far, had immediately agreed. The field had waited until Sturtevant had relieved Newell and dropped back to tell him something. Then Danny had shot out, and the process of putting Frank Sturtevant out of the running had begun.

 NOW that the question he had begged with himself rose up to hit him in the face, Bender decided against it instantly. He did not want to take that lap from Sturtevant, miserable as he felt himself to be physically. Yet what could he do? If he refused to do his best the judges would disqualify him and everything would be lost. If he let the field lap him for the sake of his principle in the matter, he knew that he and Danny could never win back the lost ground, and would emerge from the race without either money or glory. There was but one thing to do—ride. But he hated to think of his next meeting with Sturtevant.

"Are you ready?" asked Bill. "Y'ain't goin' to let Danny ride all night, are you?"

"All ready," answered the boy between shut teeth, and the men shoved him off. Putting power into his legs for the first time drove the color from his face and left it pinched and white. Every muscle and ligament seemed to screech aloud and cry out a protest against the will that forced them once more into action. He made a slow

round of the track, while the crowd, seeing him come out, thundered its applause. Never had he so wished for sudden and sweet annihilation as in that moment of popular idolatry.

He gritted his teeth still harder and increased his pace. The field swept by, and a quick glance showed him Sturtevant bottled up securely. The veteran could do nothing. Should he drive recklessly ahead and foul some one the evidence against him would be overwhelming. The others, it must be confessed, were riding at their top speed, loosely bunched to avoid accidents. Relief riders cluttered the track. Sturtevant could not find a loophole. Unless an accident occurred, he was doomed.

Suddenly, as Bender drove his screaming body, the tears of anguish standing in his eyes, something seemed to snap, and the next instant all the pain suddenly left him and almost without effort he glided forward at ever-increasing speed. Without trouble he attained the pace of the field and with a fine spurt relieved Danny, who had dropped back to the head of the leaders. Then, with a heavy heart to which no alleviation had come, he set grimly about his unwelcome task.

Sturtevant, good, old, helpful Sturtevant, had been right about the physical crisis he must pass through, and he, Harry Bender, novice and incompetent, had doubted it, remembering the elder man's words about grinding his own father down on the track. And now he, Bender, must connive with these crooks—with Danny Moffat, in fact—for the purpose of eliminating his friend and counselor.

But he realized that his first duty was to his own team and he rode his hardest. After a mile or so Danny relieved him and then, every few moments, they relayed the leadership upon each other's shoulders at regular intervals. Newell relieved Sturtevant desperately, but he had to drop back to his partner before he could officially take part, and so was effectually bottled up as his partner had been.

Bender was now but ten yards back of Newell who was riding for the team, when a curious circumstance struck him. Guffano, who had proposed the idea, was being as easily lapped as the man he had aimed to ruin. Again Sturtevant had proved himself a true prophet; the Italian had been ridden off his legs and was now an easy victim.

Danny completed the business on the next relief, and the field once more settled down to its humdrum grind, with five teams out of the running, unless they could regain the distance, and seven left to fight it out to the finish. The crowd, panting, sweating and trembling, resumed its seat with a roar and a scramble.

While Harry remained sitting on his machine in case of any further trouble, he looked up again at Martha. She was radiant and laughing. She had taken her hat off and this allowed the murky electric lights to light up her great, dark eyes and show the excited flush of her cheeks. Harry had never seen her looking so wonderful. She flashed a glorious look down upon him and, in an unguarded moment of excitement, threw him a kiss. She had often done so before, in fun, and Bender met it humorously with his fingers crossed, whereat she broke into a ripple of delighted laughter.

Bender glanced at Mr. Moffat and could scarcely recognize him. The man had his coat off and his shirt-sleeves pulled up. His hat was set far back on his head, his gray hair stood in furious bristling attitudes and his twisted glasses stood diagonally across his nose. A cigar that was chewed to an evil-looking black mass hung from one corner of his mouth. Now he leaned out of the box with the light of battle in his austere gray eyes. Evidently the father had been suddenly converted to the son's gods, and was anxious for another visitation of the spirit.

Harry had barely dismounted from his machine when a business-like young man approached him with a smile.

"That's your partner's sister up there, isn't it, Mr. Bender?" he asked genially, inspecting with a certain reverence the bicycle that Bill was holding.

"Yes, why?"

"If you win this race, I suppose you'll marry her." Harry, the innocent, smiled reflectively.

"I sure would like to," he said musingly.

"Has she promised that if you win you win twice?" pursued the other with such an evident understanding of the situation that Bender could not resent his intrusiveness.

"No, she hasn't," he replied ruefully, "but I wish she would."

"Thanks," said the other, turning away.

"Hold on! What do you want to know for?" demanded the boy, suddenly suspi-

cious. "What are my affairs to you?"

"I represent the *Morning Record*," said the young man, climbing through the fence safely upon the level floor. "Read all about it in to-morrow's edition."

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER OF THE PRESS

NOW that the physical crisis was past, Harry Bender found that he could sleep. When he next relieved Danny Moffat he was fresher and stronger by reason of a quiet nap. It was easier going now, and Bill the trainer predicted that he would begin to gain weight by Friday morning and end the grind heavier than he entered it. The field, content that Sturtevant and Newell were out of the running, loafed along without any attempt at sporty riding, until the crowd commenced to shift and yell for action.

Tireless, cheerful St. Beuve thereupon commenced his rollicking battle-song, much to the disgust of the others, who wished anything but a scorching pace:

*"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu,
Ouvre-moi la porte
Pour l'amour de Dieu."*

What there was in the past of the bright, life-loving Frenchman that called forth that song Harry Bender often wondered, for St. Beuve had once told him what it meant and revealed a charming vista of attic casements, moon-bathed chimney-pots and pointed roofs, and a white, pretty face. Perhaps it was the face, Harry thought, that spurred him to energy whenever he sang. Despite his unpleasant habit of keeping the bunch ahead of the record, St. Beuve was a wonderful rider and a prime favorite with his competitors and the crowd.

It was midnight when Danny appeared beside the track. When he had mounted and caught his partner, he put his arm affectionately across the other's shoulder and talked briefly.

"You ought to hear the governor rave," he said. "He's nuts over the game, says he'd like to get on top of a wheel himself and pull somebody's cork just to see how it feels. He hasn't begun to think of going home, and you know Martha! She'd stay

ou? "ll she fainted. By the way, sister said she
saivould like to talk a little with you if you
fencould manage it. You've no idea how
boudroud she is of us."

"All right, Danny, I'll go up and see her
later," said Harry smiling, as he turned
down the incline.

But there was something else on his mind
that must be done first. When he had been
pried off the saddle he sought out Sturte-
vant's camp at the Fourth Avenue end of
the line. The old "war-horse" was lying
in the bunk, his eyes staring blankly at the
wooden boards above his head. Harry
called him back from abstraction with an
apologetic cough.

"Oh, hello, boy!" said Sturtevant genially,
moving over to make room for his visitor
to sit down. His smile was genuine, but it
seemed the smile of a very tired man.
"Well, they got me at last, didn't they?"
he said. "I was afraid they would. Newell
and I got talking and dropped behind, and
in that second," he snapped his fingers,
"the damage was done."

"That's just the thing I came to see you
about, Frank," said Bender. "I don't want
you to think that I was in on that game, de-
spite the fact that Danny started the sprint.
I was approached down stairs by Guffano's
manager and asked to do what Danny did
—you see our team is a little bit—the
crowd seems to like us, you know—"

"Most popular team on the track,"
agreed Sturtevant heartily.

"And that's why he approached me,"
finished Bender lamely. "But I turned him
down then, and I can honestly say I hated
like poison to do what I had to when you
lost your lap. But, by the way, that was
one of the prettiest scandals I ever saw; it
fooled the judges altogether."

"Could you beat it?" asked Sturtevant
ruefully. "But we're not done for yet,
Harry. I never finished a lap behind in this
game yet and I don't expect to begin now.
Whew! I'm tired." He stretched his legs
and made a wry face.

"You tired!" cried the boy. "Go on,
you're tryin' to bull me. Nobody ever
heard of your gettin' tired. It's us poor
novices that get tied up into double knots
with cramp."

"Yes, lad," said the other slowly, "that's
so. But this is a different kind of tired.
I've never known it before in a six-day
grind, but I don't have to be told what it is.

I'm afraid this is my last race. I'm begin-
ning to go back. I've got a bald patch
from rubbing up against life, and I know
when to take a signal."

"Tired!" exclaimed Harry. "Now that
that first awful weariness is gone, why, I
feel as though I could go out there and
sprint for a half an hour, and I'd do it, too,
if it wasn't for Saturday night. I feel fresh-
er than when I started; I'm surprised at the
rebound I had in me."

"That's the trouble," came the grave re-
ply; "most of my rebound is gone. And
when I get out of this game what can I do?
That's what I was thinkin' about when you
came along. I might sell bicycles, but no-
body rides them much any more. I might
open a saloon, but the little woman wouldn't
have that on account of the kids, I know.
I'm all up in the air; I don't know where to
turn. Harry, when you get through this
race, win or lose, you walk right down
Broadway till you see a job, capture it and
never let it go.

"Don't ever get to the place where I am,
a man of forty wondering how he is going
to support a family. I got you into the
game in the first place and now, before it's
too late, I'm telling you to get out of it be-
fore it gets you. Take my advice."



BUT, since advice is the cheapest
thing in the world, and youth ab-
hors the saws of a preceding genera-
tion when its own dreams are rosy and its
own strength seems limitless, Harry Bender
could not fall with much enthusiasm into
the mood of the old "war-horse." But the
natural sense of honor in him did respond to
the fine code of the man who had been his
sponsor in their chosen profession, and he
promised himself that, if he could help it,
he would never disgrace this rider whose
hand and mind and speech were always
clean.

And could Frank Sturtevant, in his state
of depression, have realized the moral heri-
tage he had bequeathed to one destined to
be world-famous, the heart of that instinc-
tive gentleman could not have remained so
heavy. Unconsciously, without fortune,
and with fame about to slip from his grasp,
he deposited his little heap of treasure in the
soul of another; a form of enriching our
neighbors unfortunately only too rare.

Presently, having made his peace with
Sturtevant, Bender walked back to his own

camp. He could not sleep—this rejuvenation was too delightful. He looked up at the box where Martha and Mr. Moffat sat, and the girl waved her hand to him. He remembered Danny's words, and, as the field seemed half asleep, decided to go up and have a talk with her. He called Bill and pointed out the folks in the box, ordering him to conduct the pair to a secluded spot on the floor beneath the arena.

Martha was radiant. She clasped Harry's dirty hand with a pressure that was quite different from the usual reserved maidenly salutation. Excitement had made her eyes bright and her cheeks rosy, and to the youth she had never seemed quite so utterly desirable as at that minute.

"I tell you it's great, simply great, by gravy!" ejaculated Mr. Moffat excitedly as he wrung Bender's arm with both horny palms. "The way you boys lapped that bunch was worth dying to see. I wonder if the papers are out; I wish I had some one to send for a paper. Why, a boy could make a fortune selling papers in here!"

He talked and fussed as he had always done since Harry had known him. The rider grinned.

"Say, Bill," he said, turning to the trainer, "see if you can't scare up some of the morning editions, won't you? And, say, be sure and get the *Record*." Bill disappeared, with tongue in cheek.

Martha bubbled with enthusiasm and life. Wasn't it great, the way Danny had lapped that horrid Sturtevant who always won all the races? He had told them all about it.

"Yes, Martha, but we couldn't have done it alone—none of us could have. There was a combination against him, and I don't think it was exactly straight," answered the boy, a troubled look coming over his face.

"Yes, Danny told us about that, too, and it seems to me that if one team is always a top favorite, the others have a right to do anything they want to keep them out, as long as it isn't exactly wicked."

"Of course they have, of course they have!" burst in Mr. Moffat explosively, struggling into his coat. "By gravy! I'd like to know what chance you boys would have had if Sturtevant hadn't been pocketed. Now, now," he waved both arms like a swimmer, "you've got as good a chance as the rest. It's anybody's race, and I'd give a house and lot, yes, I would, and more,

if you could finish in first money, by gravy!"

At this point Bill returned with an armful of papers. Mr. Moffat seized most of them and commenced strewing the floor with spare sheets as he discarded everything but the sporting page. He fastened his twisted glasses with a jerk on to his nose and commenced to peer short-sightedly at the fine print. Bill slipped a folded paper into Bender's hands.

"Come out where it's lighter, Mr. Moffat," he urged genially. "Maybe you would like to go down and see the boys' camp."

"Sure, sure, I would!" said the little man, sweeping his sporting sheets into a disheveled wad under one arm. "Come on; how do you get there? Take me."

And Bill, vastly pleased at his stratagem, executed an extraordinary facial contortion meant to be a wink and led the voluble Mr. Moffat away.



"LET'S see what this paper's got to say," said Bender, unfolding it. He opened the *Record* to the sporting page and found there only the usual tabulation of the teams' standings with a somewhat full account of the sprint that had dethroned Sturtevant subjoined. The Bender-Moffat combination was lauded as the surprise and popular choice of the race. Bender was disappointed. Then he turned to the middle of the paper and gasped for breath. Then he backed under an electric light, pulling Martha with him.

There was a picture of himself on his racing machine in the center of the page, and alongside it a spurious photograph of Martha. The head ran as follows:

IF HE WINS HE WINS TWICE

HARRY BENDER, POPULAR IDOL OF THE SIX-DAY RACE, SPRINTS FOR A BRIDE, HIS PARTNER'S SISTER. WEALTHY FIANCEE IN HER BOX DAY AND NIGHT CHEERING HIM ON

A REAL ROMANCE OF THE TRACK

"Harry!" gasped the girl. "What on earth does this mean? How can they say such things in the paper? Why, it's all untrue, every word of it! And the picture! I ask you, Harry Bender, did I ever in my worst days look like that?"

Bender chuckled and looked into the con-

fused, flushed face of the girl beside him. Suddenly a great determination came to him. Since the paper had said these things were so, why not make them so? He had dreamed of them long and hopelessly. The paper had spoken for him and made the task easy.

"I guess you're some to blame yourself, Martha," he said. "Remember that kiss you threw me? The nut that reports for this sheet saw it and came nosing around the camp when I quit riding. I didn't get on to what he was after until he was going away."

"And do you mean to tell me you told him this?"

"No, I didn't tell him anything of the kind. I only said I wished it was so, and he made the whole yarn up from that. But say, Patty," he said, suddenly grave, a new seriousness coming into his tone, "why not make it so? You know I want you and have wanted you for the last two years. I couldn't tell you before because I had to hock my cuff-links to take you to the vaudeville sometimes, but if we come out on top in this race, things will be different. Even if we only get third money we'll have a good deal, because our expenses are paid here. Come on, now, Patty, say you will, and I'll—oh, you don't know how I could ride then! Nothing could keep us away from the money. You know your father wouldn't mind—now, and Danny'd be tickled to death. Be a good kid and say you will!"

Martha let the sheet with its trumpeting extravagances drop to the floor. Her flushed face was half turned away from the fiery pleading of his glance, because the thing had come to her so suddenly. It was not unwelcome, for she had desired it in secret, but it was strange that this should be the scene of the great moment of her life.

The place about them was murky with the dust of years, and the fly-specked incandescents barely performed their duty. It smelled with the strange smell of huge buildings given over in turn to horses, dogs, circuses and humanity. In the distance, lower down, rough laughter and talk mingled with the clink of glasses, and the crash of a cash register told where the bar operated. But the one insistent sound was the low gathering rumble as the tireless riders approached.

The rumble grew steadily, swelled to a

dull roar and faded again into the distance. They had passed a hundred times since she had been there; they would pass a thousand more. It was like life, that constant grind, with its chance of mishap, its keen competition and uncertain future.

The few gleams of romance that had fallen athwart her circumscribed but not unhappy life, had not provided for the flowering of love in this unlovely place. There had at least been beauty and sunshine and the rose-tint of illusion.

She turned slowly and looked into the eager, handsome face of the splendid youth before her. He wanted her, she knew that; perhaps he might prove the exception of his class and treat her well after twenty years. Twenty years! So much might happen in that time. What did it matter? The present was the thing—the radiant, glorious Now that would so soon be passed.

"I'll make it so, if you want me to," she said simply and held out her hands.

"Patty!" he cried low and exultantly, gripping her with his strong young fingers. He did not take her into his arms—some innate delicacy forbade that in a public place—but his eyes sought hers and held them. And then her ugly surroundings seemed to fall away like the hut in the fairy-story, and in their place came beautiful walls, music, laughter and the supremacy of living.

CHAPTER V

STURTEVANT TRIES AGAIN

NOBODY but the eagle-eyed scorers really knew how it happened. The newspaper men made out they did when they telephoned their offices, but they had already interviewed the scorers and the hero of the thing himself.

It was half-past three Friday morning. Two and a half thousand men lay back in their stiff seats, principally in the upper galleries. Their faces were congested with blood, their collars were loosened, and their feet were perched upon the backs of the seats in front of them, if such seats happened to be unoccupied.

Since one o'clock nothing had happened on the track, and these men, most of whom were due at the car-barns or delivery stables near dawn, were endeavoring to get a few winks of sleep before the cordon of police

drove them shivering into the chill morning air. The pall of tobacco smoke had mostly disappeared through the huge glass skylights above, the mile-a-minute band had long since gone home, and all but a few of the tobacco and sandwich butchers had been withdrawn. It was the time of lowest ebb in the world of the six-day race.

The riders themselves, morbidly sensitive to the lull, were keeping the slowest pace of the entire week, nodding over their handle-bars while their partners slept heavily in the curtain-shrouded bunks. At half-past two, Macri of the Guffano-Macri combination had dropped off for a few seconds completely and crashed to the floor. Even the judge who rang the bell for the few minutes' intermission yawned prodigiously. Now somnolence had again crept over the garishly lighted Garden.

Suddenly, just as the field had passed his camp, Sturtevant shot out in pursuit. He had chosen his moment well. Not a cry of warning rang out to give the alarm to the other riders. In ten seconds he had overcome the half-lap necessary to catch the field. He rode midway up the bank, his bleared, sleepless eyes fixed on the gleaming boards that flowed beneath him. Lower and lower he bent, faster and faster the white legs flashed.

Now he had caught them. Now he had passed Newell's position in the middle of the line. Now he had shot out in front like a stone from a sling! Newell rode on in his place, himself barely realizing what had occurred. Higher and higher rose the hum of Sturtevant's spokes. Into his bleared eye came a sudden gleam of hope, a hope that galvanized the steel springs of his chopping legs!

He had gained a quarter of a lap. Almost immediately it was half a lap. Then, as always, from somewhere high among the steel girders of the somnolent arena came the shrill cry of warning. It only added more power to the flying rider. Newell unobtrusively dropped to the level floor and was caught by the trainers and held up-right, ready to shoot out and relieve his partner if necessary.

Heads that had drooped over twitching handle-bars suddenly jerked erect; misty eyes blinked and strove to clear themselves. Sturtevant had gained three-quarters of a lap and was coming like a rocket! Curtis of the trailing Australian team who was

leading the bunch, lowered his head, by instinct, raised his body and drove downward into the pedals with all the strength at his command.

Like so many buffalo bulls the others followed his example and the field swiftly increased its pace. Sturtevant was but twenty yards behind the rear rider and gained momentarily more slowly. But that challenge that lends wings to any racer pursuing another, brought out a terrific burst of speed. He closed on the rear rider with a rush.

One by one he thrust them back until, whirling around the Fourth Avenue turn, he crawled in front of the desperate Curtis and led!

He had lapped the field and was again among the leaders!

Instantly the pace dropped, for the riders knew they could never regain that lap. Newell came out again and relieved his exhausted partner, slapping him affectionately on the back.



BENDER, who was riding in third position, grinned cheerfully when he realized what had happened. The old "war-horse" had come back to his own, and the boy was glad, whatever the consequences might be to him. He would have been just as cheerful if the Garden had suddenly fallen down flat as long as it left the track unobstructed.

Since the night before his heart had been singing but one refrain: "I'm going to win, I'm going to win!" He heard it in the breathless pounding of the band, he measured it in the thrusts of his feet into the pedals, he sang it in the hottest pace and the hardest sprints. It had become a part of him, for he was borne along by the exultant thought that if he won, he won twice, as the newspaper had said.

By Friday night considerable change had been made in the standing of the teams. In a hot sprint about noon, Burton, a promising young American rider, had fallen and broken his collar-bone, and with it the heart of his partner, Stillman, for they had been riding strongly among the leaders. Not an hour later Stolz of the Stolz-Behrend German team had suddenly collapsed. He had ridden to the limit of his endurance and then, delirious, had been forced to withdraw from the race on the advice of physicians.

Stillman had had four hours in which to

secure a partner. Now he immediately sought out Behrend, and they formed the Stillman-Behrend team, but, as is the rule in such cases, were penalized a lap. Both the Burton-Stillman and Stolz-Behrend combinations had been among the leaders. This rule put them, with several others, into the second division, and left only five teams with a high score.

As day wore on to night and night to morning again, Saturday morning, the pace unexpectedly increased, chiefly through the efforts of Henri St. Beuve, the wonderful French rider. In one way the Frenchman was the hero of the race. Teamed up with Wagner, a really mediocre man, he had, by his own brilliant performances, kept his team to the fore. His famous riding song, "*Au clair de la lune*," had been featured in the newspapers, and he had acquired the nickname of "Auclair"—a fact that had caused him the greatest glee.

Now, for seemingly no reason at all except the pure joy of life, he went out in front and wore down the straggling field with a persistence and endurance that made him cordially hated by the riders and loved by the populace.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, his purpose became evident. Still among the leaders was a much-talked-of combination from Holland. The day before, St. Beuve had taken careful stock of their condition and acted accordingly. Now as the first bright Winter stars commenced to show through the open skylights, Vanouaert seemed to be in trouble; the pace was too hot for him. Huylsman hurried out to his assistance, but he, too, presently, with white face and starting eyes, gradually dropped behind the flying leaders.

By this time the lesser lights had mostly withdrawn and but eight teams remained. The four others of the first division instantly divined the plight of the Hollanders and lost no time in starting a vicious sprint, no such sprint as they might have started five days before, but a fast, relentless grind continued unceasingly for half an hour.

Every ten or twelve laps a new pace-maker took up the duty. The second division riders, finding no spirit to respond to this iron challenge, were lapped many times.

Every half-mile the desperate Dutchmen relieved each other, but to no avail. Vanouaert, wabbling and sobbing over his handle-bars, was worn down and caught, and

the field swept triumphantly past. Now there remained but four high-rank teams, St. Beuve-Wagner, Bender-Moffat, Sturtevant-Newell and the Riley-Robbins Irish-American combination.

After Sturtevant's magnificent effort in the regaining of the lost lap, Harry Bender had been slightly skeptical as to the old fellow's failing physical condition. But now, as the race drew toward its close, he observed the long-legged rider with a mingled feeling of alarm and satisfaction. The afternoon's hard work seemed to have left as definite an impress upon Sturtevant as though he had endured physical torture. His face was haggard and gone-looking. There were blue marks round his nostrils and under his eyes. His mouth hung open and he licked his lips with nervous frequency.

"I wonder if Newell will have to ride the special mile," he thought. "If they do, it's one team less to fight. I'd as soon send Danny into a sprint as Newell." But he shook his head at the thought. "No," he mused, "Sturtevant will ride; he could beat that partner of his asleep. But he certainly looks done for, Sturdy does. I guess he was right when he said this was his last race."

His thoughts turned to more joyful topics. Martha he had not seen since Friday afternoon, when she had come in for a few hours to smile upon and encourage him and her brother. Mr. Moffat had discovered in himself the ingenuity of an office-boy on the occasion of a pennant-raising at the Polo Grounds, and had kept his employers in a continuous flutter regarding his health—which certainly was not improved by continuous residence in the smoky, fetid atmosphere of the Garden.

During this residence Danny and Harry had been embarrassed and impeded by his constant attentions. He made their camp his regular stopping-place and paraded up and down in front of it with a cigar in his mouth as though he were in the habit of producing champions every time he set his mind to it.

Harry had been assured that Martha and her father would take up their abode in the Garden that night as soon as they could choke down some supper at a near-by dairy lunch, and would remain on hand until the last dog was hung and the last light out.

CHAPTER VI

A TANK OF OXYGEN

IT WAS eight-fifteen. The gentleman who could have given Stentor both bowers and an ace and beat his roars into small whispers had just announced the score for the one hundred and fortieth hour. It was a remarkable score, being some five miles and three laps ahead of the world's record, and the fact was attested by the thinned ranks of the racers.

Harry Bender was riding his last hour before the special mile to decide the ultimate winners, and would keep the saddle until nine o'clock. Then Danny Moffat would go on the track until ten, when the race officially ended. There was little question now that accident or exhaustion would change the face of matters before the final test. The men plugged along just fast enough to nose out the best previous figures by a mile or so at the finish, and refused to waste any further energy in sprinting.

Banked around the arena in every box, tier and gallery, the Saturday night crowd shouldered and talked and expelled smoke. The lights of the grimy Garden seemed to be brighter than ever before, lighting up with especial glory the air-stirred banners that announced whiskies, tobaccos and newspapers. In the level island around which the track ran, the blue-coated band played unusually *prestissimo*, and the citizen who aimed loops of candy at a butcher's hook exercised steadily. No sooner did the band stop than the strident voices of white-coated venders broke out from all parts of the house.

Once as he passed his camp, Bill the trainer held something out to Bender which he snatched. It proved to be a note from Danny.

"Sturtevant's all in, I guess," it ran. "They've been taking oxygen-tanks into his quarters. Go easy, old top. You look fine."

So it had come to that! Bender felt sorry for the old "war-horse," but he could not repress a wave of hope that swept over him at the intelligence. If old age had really undermined Sturtevant's system and was putting him out of the riding, it was too bad from one point of view. Bender would really have liked to try conclusions

with his mentor. Yet, with oxygen, he might pull through. Harry had heard of wonderful results obtained by the use of it. But he acknowledged a feeling of pride that he would have no recourse to such stimulation.

At nine o'clock sharp, Danny appeared on the track and received a generous burst of applause. There was no question but that the Bender-Moffat team was the popular favorite. Harry dismounted with the aid of his trainers and stood for a moment looking at the banked masses of humanity that rose all about him. Whatever the result, he had won their favor, and his heart warmed to them. His eye traveled down to the box directly opposite. There with brilliant eyes and flushed cheeks, dressed in her one party gown, sat Martha. She threw him a radiant smile that contained all the promise in the world.

Bill, beside him, thrust something into his hand, and once more executed the remarkable wink the situation seemed to call for. It was another note. Harry opened it in the shelter of his bunk. It ran:

Dearest: If you win to-night, you win twice.

That was all. He grinned happily to himself. Win! Of course he'd win, nothing could keep him from it, after that!

The curtains of the bunk were shot sharply back and the pale face of Mr. Moffat appeared like an apparition.

"How are you, my boy?" he fussed. "Want a little rubbing, eh? That's right, a little rubbing will do you good. No? Better sleep then. Every minute of rest may win this race. Feeling all right? By gravy! you look a little pale around the gills. Say, Harry, if you win this race I'll see if I can't raise enough to send you to Berlin. I will, by gravy! You and Danny. You'll ride those Dutchmen off the map, you will!"

Harry, with extreme patience, listened to the tirade of the little man whose gray hair stood on end in thirty different directions and who chewed what might once have been a cigar. Then he swung his legs out and sat up. Sleep or rest were the last things he could think of. The uncertainty and fear of the special mile were gripping his vitals. Could he win? So much depended on it!

"I guess I'll go and look in on my friend

Sturtevant," he announced nervously, rising to his feet.

Newell had been riding for the last two hours. He was a good plugger and was in fine condition, but it was ridiculous to think of putting him in the sprint.



BENDER found several trainers gathered around Sturtevant's bunk, of which the curtains were drawn.

One was massaging his legs, and, just as Bender arrived, two others ran up the track and disappeared. The boy looked in on his friend.

"Well, Pop," he said, "*wie geht es?*"

"Rotten, Harry," came the reply from the colorless lips. "I'm all in and no mistake this time."

"Honest, Pop, I'm sorry," cried the boy, genuinely. "I didn't want you to win, of course, but I would like to have done that mile with you in good shape."

The pinched face of the other relaxed and lighted up.

"That's the kind of talk I like to hear from a youngster," he said warmly. "You're a good sport, Harry, and I'll back you against the field. Any fellow that thinks that way is bound to win sooner or later."

"What's the matter? Aren't you going to ride?"

"Oh, yes, I'll ride, but I'm afraid I won't place—in the first three," he returned with a grim smile.

"Well, I thought you had oxygen-tanks and all that sort of thing here. Hasn't that done you any good?"

"It might, if some one hadn't come along and turned the cock and let the stuff all out. I told you the combination would get me this time, and it has."

Bender sat back, silent, and speechlessly contemplated the thing that had been done.

"Gawd! What a filthy trick!" he ejaculated at last. "I could kill the man that did that!"

"So could I, but I won't. It ain't worth while when I'm so near gone anyway. But forget about me; let's talk about you. I want you to go out and win. And remember this: Don't you jump the bunch on the final lap or two. Let St. Beuve or Riley do that, unless, of course, it's too near the finish. A man can always ride faster when he is catching some one else. I've proved it many a time.

"On the last lap ride high on the Fourth

Avenue turn so you will get the added momentum of the steep grade down to the finish on the middle of the Twenty-seventh Street side. If the result is a matter of inches, it's a good plan to put all your strength into one last push of either your right or left leg. That has pulled me through more than once, though it has only given me the race by the margin of a rim's-width.

"And, last of all, don't think you know better than I do, and start going away from the field on the last half-mile because you hate to wait. If you do, you'll finish last, take it from me!"

"Look here, Pop," cried the young man, resolutely, holding up a hand, "you are giving me all your ten years' dope in ten minutes. Don't do it. It isn't fair. I suppose you've sent for more oxygen?"

A nod in the affirmative.

"Well, then, if it comes, you will probably be as fit as any of us, and think of the advantage I'll have over you."

"It won't come, I'm pretty sure," replied Sturtevant gloomily. "I've sent a couple of men out on the trail of the stuff, but the drug-stores around here don't carry it. You may have an advantage and you may not. Anyway, I've given you good advice and I want to ask a favor of you in return."

"Go ahead."

"Never team up again with your friend, Danny Moffat."

"Say, you must be crazy, Pop! Next to you, Danny's the best friend I've got. Why, if we win this race, his old man is going to raise the money and send us to Berlin. That's askin' a lot, Frank."

"I know it is, Harry, but I'm not asking for anybody's good but your own. You know I've never been anything but square and white to you, and I'm never likely to be anything else. Won't you take my word for it and promise?"

The immediate considerations loomed up too large in the youth's mind.

"I'll have to know your reasons for this," he said, at last. "I couldn't ditch Danny without a word, could I? That wouldn't be square to him."

"No," meditated the other, "it wouldn't, that's right. Well, I'll tell you. I didn't intend to at first, but now I think I'd better. Danny is the devil who let the oxygen out of my tanks. Don't ask me how I

know. The men told me how they discovered it and there's no use rubbing the matter in. It's tough enough on you as it is. But you see why I want you to promise, don't you?

"A straight man can't team up with a crooked man without being known as one of a crooked combination. It won't be long before Danny Moffat will be known all through sporting circles for what he is. For your sake the papers won't get the information, but the men with contracts and offers in their pockets will, and they will believe me when they hear my story. I've never lied yet. Now will you promise?"



THE older man let his weary, wandering eyes rest on the younger's face and closed his lips tightly on the words he had meant to add. Bender seemed to have aged suddenly as he sat there. All the Springtime of youth seemed to have gone out of him; his face was lined and worn, his shoulders stooped as though he were very tired, his blue eyes seemed pale and watery. With head slightly on one side he seemed to be listening to the crashing ruin of his life as it fell blackly about him.

"Can you prove this, Pop?" he croaked at last and cleared his parched throat with a painful effort.

"Yes, my boy, I can."

"I'll never ride with him again," said Bender abstractedly and rose to stumble back in the direction of his own bunk. He fell into the tumbled sleeping-place, scarcely realizing that he did so, and the rubbers commenced to massage his legs.

"Where's old man Moffat?" he demanded suddenly.

"Went out a while ago," was the reply.

"— old busybody! Why isn't he around when some one wants him?" muttered the distracted boy.

Just then a bell announced that ten o'clock had come and the race was over. The last mile had been at a fast clip and the crowd was roaring. Danny, smiling and debonair, had sprinted to the fore in the final lap and finished first, a fact that added to the popularity of Bender and Moffat. The seething thousands were still uproarious when Danny drew up outside and was caught by a couple of trainers.

"Bill," said Harry in a husky voice, "tell Danny to come here right away, and

then you and Tom clear out for about ten minutes, will you? I want to talk something private to him."

Five minutes later, Danny, bright, confident and happy, threw aside the curtain of the bunk.

"Well, old world's champion," he cried, "and how are you feeling? Say, for heaven's sake, what makes you look that way, Harry? Are you dying? Have they poisoned you? What are you looking at me like that for? Quit it, I tell you! You're not going to funk now, are you? Holy —! If I'd 'a' thought you had a yellow streak in you I'd 'a' got somebody else. Hey! Let go of my arm——"

"Danny," said Bender in a slow, cool voice, "did you turn the cock on old man Sturtevant's oxygen-tanks? Don't lie to me! I know the truth! Did you?"

Danny looked fearlessly into the steady blue eyes of the other for a minute. Then the glance made desperate attempts to escape that level gaze. Finally, with many quick shiftings back and forth it tore itself away. His weak chin trembled a minute. Then he looked again into Harry's eyes.

"What if I did?" he said defiantly. "It was your only chance; you couldn't beat him in the special mile if I hadn't. What are you croaking about?"

"Then you admit you did it?"

"Sure, for our best interests. It isn't really crooked, you know," he went on with factitious gaiety. "I was just sharper than his men, that's all."

"Were you?" Bender laughed bitterly. "Sturtevant told me about it himself, just now. Mighty sharp you are!"

Danny paled in earnest this time.

"Lord! Is that right? Say, this will queer us for fair! This thing's got to be hushed up. If you win—" he pondered swiftly—"if you win, do you suppose five hundred would stop his mouth?"

Bender rose up on one elbow, his eyes blazing.

"Get out of here!" he snarled. "You make me sick! But, see here," as the other rose hurriedly, "I want you back in five minutes. I'll have something to tell you then. And you be on the dot, too, or something'll happen you won't forget!"

Danny slunk away, dropping the curtains behind him.

Outside, the Garden hummed with the

expectancy of ten thousand people. The band played and the venders hawked. Three camps were busy with the last desperate preparation of their champions. Bill unobtrusively drifted back to his ministrations. There was yet half an hour before the special mile.

But Harry Bender was as though alone in a desert place. Back and forth raged the battle within him. Since this thing had happened, victory lay in his hands. Money, a big future, Martha, were his for the taking. Sturtevant, realizing all, had urged him to go in and win. Knowing all the circumstances, the veteran, out of the goodness of his kind old heart, had told him how best to accomplish it. He had even declared he would hush the matter up so far as he, Bender, was concerned. Good old "war-horse"!

But could he do it? Shame and disgust flooded his face with a feverish tide of fire. Then the thought of his career, a career darkened at its very outset by a despicable act, came to him. "A man who can't ride straight can't live straight," Sturtevant had once told him, and Sturtevant always knew.

"I'm young and this is only one race," Bender told himself desperately. "I've got all my career before me, whether I win or lose now. But, oh, Patty, I can't think of losing you!"

Then a sudden chill struck into his heart. He recalled Martha's attitude when Danny had lapped Sturtevant early in the race by the help of the combination. She had thought it was only right—only taking a fair advantage. Danny was her idol. She would probably sympathize with him now.

 HE WAS alone; he could not even turn to a thought of her for comfort.

But Sturtevant, who had taught the boy to ride and watched over his amateur days, had not labored in vain.

"I can't ride, and I won't ride, whatever happens," groaned Bender, the tears rising to his eyes. Just then Danny threw open the curtains of the bunk, and stood looking sullenly down. Harry signed Bill to leave them.

"Danny," said he calmly, "if we win that mile, you'll have to do it."

"Me? I can't sprint. What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm not going to ride against Sturtevant after what you've done. Either you ride or we withdraw, that's all."

"But, Harry," cried the other frantically, "we stand to lose everything if I ride! Don't you see? Are you crazy? For God's sake, don't be such a fool as this! I'll never do it again as long as I live. I swear I won't! Why, every one of that bunch could beat me without half trying. *Please* ride, Harry! I'll do anything you say, if you'll only ride!"

"I won't," was the obdurate answer, "and that's all there is about it!"

Suddenly there was a scuffling of feet outside and the thump of something heavy set down on the floor.

"There, that'll do, boys; just leave it there for a minute," cried the fussy voice of Mr. Moffat. He popped his head inside the curtains.

"Ah, Harry, my boy, I've got it at last. Just the thing for you. Oxygen, by gravity, that'll make you fly like a bullet. Here, Danny, get back and give him a little air. I thought he looked a little blue around the gills, but this'll fix him. 'Oxygen, that's the thing, by gravity!' I said to myself, and went out and got some. Just beat out two other men for the last tank the druggist had. Now lie right down, my boy, lie down, I say! Eh? eh? What's this?"

Harry Bender had sprung from the bunk.

"Take that down to Sturtevant *now*, and I'll ride," he said tensely, pointing to the metal container.

He glanced swiftly at the clock. There were still twenty minutes. It was enough. But Mr. Moffat fluttered like a hen.

"Never, by gravity!"

"Oh, shut up, governor, and give us a hand," snarled Danny, laying hold of one side. "What Harry says goes in this camp!"

Swiftly the two men dragged the heavy tank down the floor, Bender following in the rear. The two men who had gone to find oxygen for Sturtevant came running down from the top of the track, their faces dark with disappointment.

"There's the old geezer that done us out of it," said one of them, indicating the flurried Mr. Moffat. Bender beckoned them.

"Take this in to Sturtevant," he said, "but don't let on who gave it to you until after the special mile. Promise? You

can't have it until you do. Tell him you bought it."

"Surest thing you know!" bellowed one, gathering the tank into his arms and lumbering toward the rival camp.

Harry ran back to his bunk as lightly as though on steel springs. Hope, satisfaction and happiness surged through his body with the warm, fresh blood that his heart released.

"Come on, Bill," he cried cheerfully. "Slap 'em up lively, we haven't much time."

CHAPTER VII

THE FINAL MILE

SILENCE had gripped ten thousand people by the throat. They leaned far forward in their seats, motionless, passive, but potentially explosive. They were like a great mound of dry fagots waiting for the brand.

Across the gleaming slant of the yellow board track on the Twenty-seventh Street side a black line held the world in suspense. Behind it, four men in colored tights and jerseys, four glittering bicycles, and four sweater-clad huskies maneuvered quickly. Behind these in a spruce overcoat and derby stood a State senator with a gleaming revolver held limply in his right hand.

The hands of as many watches in the crowd as were correct pointed to five minutes after the half-hour. The colors of the four riders were distinctive: Sturtevant, red and white; Bender, blue and black; St. Beauve, orange and black; Riley, green throughout.

While his trainer was tightening a nut, Sturtevant walked over to Bender, who was a little pale and nervous at the ordeal he faced.

"Well, the boys got it at last," he said happily, "and I feel a hundred per cent. better. You look a little bit scared. That will pass off as soon as we get around the first turn. Remember everything I told you."

"That's hardly fair now, is it?" asked Harry, with an uncertain smile.

"Why, sure," replied the other generously. "But don't expect this is going to be a clean sweep for you. I've warned you about that enough."

"I don't expect anything," replied Harry grimly.

"Get ready!" came from the starter.

The racers separated and walked to their machines, where they quickly bestrode them while attendants strapped their feet into the pedals. St. Beauve had the pole, Sturtevant was next, Riley third and Bender on the outside. They had drawn lots for position, but the start made very little difference with the finish in that regard.

Bender feared but two men, the Frenchman and Sturtevant. Riley was an unknown quantity and the boy felt he could dispose of him if necessary on short notice. But with the others he was not at all sure. It warmed his heart to remember, however, that they had a healthy respect for him—even Pop Sturtevant.

"Are you ready?" asked the starter, raising his revolver into the air.

For a second, twenty-thousand eyes were attracted and held by its glitter.

Harry could feel his heart beat fast and loud. The pain of nervousness intensified as Bill set him in an upright position and held him there.

Bang!

The sudden shock instinctively galvanized his legs with a spasm of energy and he shot out ahead of the field, as the long-confined billows of noise once more tumbled and roared and shook in the arena. But immediately he relaxed. Nervousness was gone from him now; only a cool and calculating brain remained.

Almost abreast, the four riders loafed around the first turn, watching one another like pirates dividing plunder. Never had they gone so slowly, even during the sleepiest hours of the long grind. With heads lowered and weight well forward on their pedals they were poised like tightly wound springs waiting for the touch that would release them.

"Auclair," still humming his infernal song, suddenly shot forward and took the pace, hitting up a lively but not extending clip. The others, well bunched, followed a wheel's width to the rear.

Four laps they made in this fashion while the band tried to blow the roof off, and the numerous partisans of each rider mixed prayers, supplications and curses in adoration to their idol.

"Why don't they ride?" complained Harry to himself. "This is awful!"

Then he remembered Sturtevant's warning and fought down the intense desire that

rose in him to shoot to the fore and finish at top speed. He wondered which man he should watch. They still rode in the same order from the pole as when they started. Bender stole a look at Riley, who was to his left, and thought he detected in the set jaw and burning eyes an insatiable desire to break. He determined to watch him, for he credited St. Beauve and Sturtevant with too much experience in a case of this kind.

Five laps they finished, and still no one "jumped." The crowd was beginning to howl for a race. Now the strain on Bender's patience was almost insupportable. Must everything depend on the whirl of one lap?



SUDDENLY he heard a grunt, and on the instant Sturtevant, doubled almost into a knot, his legs a tangle of flashing white, leaped out, the red point of a flying wedge! Bender forgot everything in the concentrated effort to crowd every ounce of steam down upon the pedals. Sturtevant was a length and a half ahead; to the left on even terms tore St. Beauve; half a length behind came Riley. In the seats, half the spectators were trying to tell the other half that never in his racing career had Sturtevant "jumped" the field! He had fooled them all, as usual, the wizard!

Round the turn they flew, seeming to stand out at right angles to the perpendicular, so great was the banking necessary to keep the track. In less time than it can be written or said they had ridden a lap. With one eye ahead and one at the left Harry Bender sprinted as he had never dreamed of sprinting. The roars of the spectators had become as the dull booming of some distant surf. Mr. Moffat, Danny, Martha—all were forgotten in the frenzy of the necessity that overwhelmed his soul.

Strength, youth, indomitable will, he had all these, and the red jersey of Frank Sturtevant commenced to come back to him as though drawn by some invisible and invincible agency. So close beside him that their knees almost touched rode Riley, the dark horse, the unknown quantity, also young and strong and indomitable.

Eight laps and a half and the three rode abreast, seemingly riveted together, the red, the blue and the green jerseys level and still, but shooting through space like

the colored balls of a rocket. On the next turn Sturtevant dropped back a foot despite the fact that he had the pole. Bender ceased thinking of him and devoted his attention to the tenacious green at his side.

Nine laps! Slowly the green commenced to draw away, and on the first turn of the final tenth of a mile, a yard separated the front tires of the three leaders. Then into Bender's consciousness came the fact that something was drawing up on his right and he knew who it was. The feared St. Beauve had saved himself for the final effort, and was coming along on the outside.

Then mad, unreasoning anger shook the boy, anger against these experienced men who were wearing him down with their science and skill. The anger lent him almost superhuman strength, and, tilting himself just a trifle more forward, he bore down with the last ounce that was in him.

Back came Riley to a point abreast; back still farther he went. The menacing figure at the right had also faded from the tail of Bender's eye. He took the last turn so swiftly that the human eye could scarcely follow. Forty yards away was the black line and money and fame and love and everything that is good in life!

Forty yards and—

There was the instant prescience of a near body and then, on his left, Frank Sturtevant, the "war-horse" of the racing game, went by him in the last and greatest effort of the hero's career. When the black line flashed under them, the boy's front tire was at the hub of the other's front wheel. At his own hub was St. Beauve, and, at the Frenchman's, Riley!

The thousands screamed, the band blared, the house rocked, but Harry Bender only realized that he was suddenly very, very tired.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW TEAM

ON THE next night Harry, with some diffidence, presented himself at the Moffat flat on One Hundred and Sixteenth Street near St. Nicholas Avenue with a tall, lank man who carried a bald spot which he said had been made by rubbing up against life.

Martha received them formally in a lawn frock with a Dutch neck, and led them

into the gas-lit parlor, where they installed themselves on the green plush-covered "mahogany" furniture and looked in an uncertain manner between their feet upon the green rug with its festoon of pink roses.

"I'm sure I must compliment you on your success last night," said Martha to Sturtevant, bridling slightly.

"Thanks. I earned it. I thought the boy had me for a while. But I laid back after the 'jump' and he thought I was out of it and fought everybody else in turn. Then I came along with just enough reserve to beat him. But you don't hold it against me, do you, son?"

"Not a bit, Pop. You told me if you were in shape you'd trim me."

"And you brought the winner along to show me?" asked Martha coolly.

"No, ma'am, he did not," interposed Sturtevant. "I brought myself along. He says you've turned against him and keep rubbin' it in that he betrayed his team for a friend. Well, let me tell you one thing, Miss Moffat: if I had known what he was doing I wouldn't have used the oxygen for a minute. My men told me they had bought it and I used it."

"You didn't tell me that, Harry," said the girl.

"Your father knew it and so did Danny. They might have told you," was the boy's bitter reply.

"Well, they didn't," she said slowly, a look of puzzlement coming into her dark eyes.

"And they might have told you *why* Harry was willing to throw over certain victory for almost certain defeat."

"Aw, now, Pop, we needn't go into that," cried Bender, rising abruptly.

"You shut up, son, and wait until I'm through. I'm tired of having you misunderstood and I'm not going to have any more of it."

Thereupon, disregarding Bender's frantic interruptions, he told the story of Danny's shady conduct. When he had finished, the girl sat pale and still, her eyes fixed upon the floor.

"And my brother did a thing like that?"

she asked at last. "Why didn't you tell me, Harry?"

"Oh, I *couldn't*, Pat!" he burst out. "He and I have been pals for so long, and I knew you worshiped the ground he walked on."

"Yes," came the low answer, "but I worship the ground some one else walks on more!"

And Sturtevant picked the family Bible off the rattan table and commenced at Genesis.

Along toward the middle of Exodus he heard the girl sigh:

"Well, I guess we won't have that honeymoon in Berlin after all."

"No, but Bronxville——" began Harry.

"Wait a minute," cried Sturtevant, and fished in his inside coat pocket. "This here," continued he, holding out a paper, "is a contract to cover expenses for yourself, partner and trainer for the six-day grind in Berlin. One of the managers of the Garden had it all ready for the second man to finish and asked me to give it to you. Of course I got one myself, but I won't use it. I've ridden my last mile. But here's my scheme:

"Of course you can't ride with Danny again, saving your feelings, Miss Moffat, but my partner Newell is young and the best plugger in the business. Now you team up with him and that will make yourself and partner as the contract says. What about it?"

"But the trainer. Who is that?" asked Harry.

"That's me," replied Sturtevant complacently. "I've found my job at last. It's to make you the greatest bicycle rider—after myself—the world ever saw. And I can do it."

"But how about me?" came a small, pathetic voice.

"Oh, you," said Sturtevant grandly, waving a long hand. "You're merely a wife and don't have any place in these contracts. I must direct you to the City Hall. If I might suggest," he coughed apologetically, "I would say, 'make it to-morrow morning.'"



The Camp-Fire



A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

CAPTAIN FRITZ DUQUESNE recently returned from a trip as traveling salesman. His line is elephants, and you can place your order with him through this office. We deduct no commission when the deal is between friends.

Seriously, that is exactly what he was doing. You will remember that he has a bill before Congress, in which the United States Department of Agriculture is much interested, for the introduction into this country of the llama, hippopotamus, bustard, camel, giraffe, many species of antelope, and so on. That may sound funny till you remember that horses, cattle, pigs, sheep and goats were all equally foreign to this country when they were first imported; that the animals Captain Duquesne proposes have decided economic value, and that most parts of this country are as well adapted to raising one or more kinds of them as is their native heath.

Well, last Winter some big ranchers or planters, or whatever they call them, in Brazil or the Argentine—I've forgotten which—wanted their Government to consider the importation of elephants from Asia or Africa to use in the lumber-camps, just as they have been used for generations in India.

These planters communicated with Captain Duquesne and arranged for him to come down, look the ground over and help present the case to their Government. Incidentally, he asked me to go along with him, and I've been eating my heart out ever since because I couldn't arrange it. I'd rather sell elephants than almost anything else.

But he departed without me and made elephant-selling calls all the way down—the West Indies, Central America and along the South American coast.

Then the New York papers came out with an account of how he and some of his family, who seem to have joined him on the return trip, were attacked by the street-railway rioters in Kingston, Jamaica. Captain Duquesne, with a hammer from the tool-kit of the auto, and his brother-in-law with a jack-handle, gave a good account of themselves, but all of the party were severely used, Mrs. Duquesne so badly that she was taken to the hospital in a serious condition.

I HAD heard nothing from him for months. He had sent me a letter and some manuscript, I learned afterward, via some one on the *Prinz Joachim*, but they were lost when that vessel was wrecked.

Still no news direct from the Captain.

One day I answered the phone and heard his voice. He had just reached New York and said he would be in to see me that afternoon. I asked for his New York address, but he said he hadn't any yet. ("The Fighting Dwarfs of the Congo" had been accepted after he left, and I had a check for him.)

But he didn't come in that afternoon, nor did I have even a word from him as the days went by. Vanished.

A week later came the following, on the letter-head of a private hospital:

I did not know I was badly hurt in Kingston. I caved in the day I called you up. A rib was planted edgewise in my lung. My jaw was splintered so

badly that my face had to be opened to put it together. While they were at it, I got them to cut a Boer War bullet out of my abdomen. All O. K., I think—nothing to do till to-morrow. Will be in to see you this week. Best wishes.

F. DUQUESNE.

Only a very few days later he appeared—partially appeared, that is, for his head and face were pretty well covered with bandages. I was hurrying madly to get away on vacation the next day, but naturally I snatched time to visit with him.

THE Kingston experience had been pretty bad. On the way to dinner on an American war-ship their auto had been attacked by some five hundred of the lawless Jamaican blacks who were using the strike as an opportunity to riot and loot. The auto was destroyed—gasoline-tank opened and set on fire while Mrs. Duquesne lay on its floor, crippled by a cobblestone. Hundreds of pounds of bricks and stones were taken from the wrecked car next day. Razors lashed to long bamboo poles played an ugly part. Native troops were called out and volley-fired in a manner to endanger the victims about as much as the assailants.

Captain Duquesne came through with less damage than the others, but, as shown above, his case was bad enough. His body was almost one solid bruise from stones and other missiles. Worst of all, his wife was still in the hospital at Kingston.

I left for Costa Rica the next day, and he went back to Kingston a day or two later.

I have had not a word from him since. But I know that all members of the Camp-Fire will join me in the hope that things are going well with him and his.

DR. J. ULRICH GIESY writes as follows concerning his story in this number (his first appearance in ADVENTURE):

"Pride of Race" may be said to be a "sermon in patriotism." Not that patriotism is dead, but that in the rush of our present commercial life we are likely to "forget." Also it may be said to show the influence of a good woman on men's affairs. Women are really "the founts from which men spring." A good woman is the highest evolution of the race. We owe them all a meed of respect. We all have a debt to our fellow men and country. Only as we pay our moral debt—do our duty—to our fellow men and our country can we win our own approval and feel that we are really men. Danton was a man, and he felt all this and acted up to his beliefs. He won his own respect and the love of a woman as well.

Dr. Giesy lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, but was born near Chillicothe, Ohio, and spent part of his boyhood on a farm in southeastern Kansas. At seventeen he returned to Ohio to attend the Starling Ohio Medical College at Columbus, spending the Summers with his maternal grandfather, a physician in Tiffin. Which brief statement will serve to give him an identity to his unknown readers until we have a chance to present him more fully to the Camp-Fire.

CHARLES EDWARD DANIELL, whose "Swamp Crows" in this issue and other tales in other issues you have doubtless enjoyed, spent two years down on the border of the Florida Everglades before that country was discovered by Northern tourists. At that time Miami was merely a cluster of palmetto-thatched huts, two wooden houses and the ancient lime-rock house (originally built by the old Spaniards) called Fort Dallas, where Colonel Dade was butchered by the Seminoles. The population numbered sixty—a scattering of fugitives, Conchs (natives of the Bahamas), itinerant plume-hunters, "Crackers," and a sprinkling of settlers.

Once, when he was swimming a shark-infested river—but we'll have to save that little story for another time, merely relieving your mind by explaining that he got across.

THE data on "Lost Mines of the Great Southwest," which appears in the next two issues, have been gathered by Horace J. West, who came to the Pacific slope when a sixteen-year-old boy, lured from his Texas home by the exciting tales of fabulous fortunes. For more than twenty years he has followed one discovery after another, himself located the famous Christmas Diggings in Kern County, California, in 1892, and later the wonderfully productive Quartzite property near Yuma. He was one of the first men at Searchlight, Nevada, where he discovered the old St. Louis workings; saw Goldfield in its infancy; was on hand at the Gold Roads discovery in Arizona, and has met most of the mining men who ever ventured distantly into the solitudes of the West. From tales about the camp-fires, from original discoveries of some of the lost properties or from those who knew them well, he gathered the data which form the basis of the present articles written by J. D. Minster.

ROB REED McNAGNY, who wrote "**\$1,000**," writes me from Columbia City, Indiana:

I can remember picking the last mortal remains of a very dead potato out of my ear at the Pan-handle freight depot in Chicago during the teamsters' strike in 1905, and wondering just which one of some fifty grinning "teameos" and freight roustabouts my duty as a deputy sheriff required me to get personal with; and I recall the odd thrill that crept over me when I read the newspaper account of my death in a cyclone, during what was—so far as I can learn—the only manpower house-boat trip ever made from Chicago down the Drainage Canal, Illinois River and Mississippi. I've been a laborer, a commercial artist, an amateur riverman, an artist's model—which is almost an adventure in itself—a country lawyer, and yea, even a scribbler in a small way; but I've never had any really "for sure" adventures.

Still, he seems to have moved about quite a little and to have seen a good deal of life. You can be an adventurer without cutting a throat.

RALPH J. ROEDER has been a cow-puncher along the headwaters of the Rio Grande, but has had most of his adventures in the pursuit of his profession, the law. For the law, as he puts it, deals with "cross purposes, misunderstandings and human struggles, and that, when properly distilled, is ninety per cent. of the elixir of adventure."

And it would seem that this is true. "Faces Three," for example. While it is not the story of an actual happening, the fact remains that only this Spring a clever attempt was made to obtain from Mr. Roeder a note upon which, unknown to him at the time, rested the entire fabric of a case. Fortunately Mr. Roeder was cautious on general principles and the attempt came to naught.

Again: Last December, in an apparently hopeless attempt to get a writ of habeas corpus for three children a fleeing wife had brought to St. Louis and hidden in some slum tenements, Mr. Roeder, after every clue and trace had failed him, was led directly to the hiding-place by the chance word of a twelve-year-old street arab whose confidence had been established by an allusion to life in the cattle country.

YOU will find, perhaps, that "An Object Lesson" in this issue, besides being an exciting story of adventure, will make you think a little too. Not the kind

of thinking that makes your head ache, but the kind that suddenly gives you a new point of view. The following letter from **W. Henry Francis**, written from his home in England, lends additional interest to the story:

After Mandalay had fallen and King Thibaw with his evil Queen had been led away into lifelong captivity, the British forces were engaged for several years in what was termed colloquially "dacoit hunting."

To be at war and yet to have a sympathetic understanding of your enemy is not possible for ordinary men, and of all forms of war the most exasperating is guerilla warfare. The result was that the English formed erroneous and unjust ideas of their Burmese foes.

Although those days are long since past, one still may hear, in clubs and regimental messes, two unjust judgments passed upon our former enemies. One is that all those who fought against us were dacoits. The other is that Burmese men are cowards.

Now, one of the precious qualities of fiction is that it teaches us to understand our fellow men. So, in the hope of correcting these mistaken views, I wrote two short stories.

"An Eye for an Eye," which has not been published in America, was an attempt to prove, in the guise of an adventure story, that among the men we called dacoits were many who were fighting for their country. In "An Object Lesson" I hoped to show that the Burmese method of warfare was no sign of cowardice; and your readers will be able to judge whether I have succeeded.

W. HENRY FRANCIS.

I HAVE a fair-sized map of South America on which the Amazon River measures four and a half inches as the crow flies. Perfectly harmless-looking river, with lots of smaller rivers running into it.

The *Mauretania* draws a bit over thirty-five feet. Almost the largest steamship in the world.

The *Mauretania* can steam up that river for three thousand five hundred miles! Farther than the transatlantic voyage from here to Europe. Clear across the continent from the Atlantic to within two or three hundred miles of the Pacific.

That is the picturesque way of putting it, but it comes pretty close to being literally true for eight months of the year. Very likely it is absolutely true. And it rather makes one's eyes bulge. That Amazon must be some river. And South America quite a sizable place. Hadn't quite realized it, somehow.

Here are a few facts gleaned from **Algot Lange**, **Ledward Rawlinson**, **Russell B. Huffman**, **R. M. Brown** (in charge of

the expedition Mr. Huffman describes in "Through Perilous Peru"), and other sources:

Take Iquitos, Peru. There the Amazon, or Rio dos Solimoes, is 197 feet deep and two and a half miles broad. And Iquitos is 2,500 miles from the mouth of the Amazon! To be sure, the river falls, during the four dry months centering around September, to 18 feet, but then!

All the year round, wet season and dry, regular steamers ply between Iquitos and Liverpool and Iquitos and New York. How would you like to take a 2,500-mile river-trip on the same steamer that had brought you from New York to Brazil?

A little above Iquitos the Ucayali joins the Marañon to form the main stream. About a thousand miles up from Iquitos the Ucayali is joined by the Pachitea. Up to that point the *Mauretania* could sail.

Get a map of South America and count the tributaries of the Amazon that measure from five hundred to a good deal over a thousand miles in length. At least a dozen. Most of us have never even heard their names.

The Amazon, at Manaos, Brazil, 1,000 miles from its mouth, is twelve miles wide. All along its course there are places where it attains great widths. Yet at Obidos, only 500 miles from its mouth, it "narrows" to a third of a mile and all the volume of water from above must rush through this comparatively small channel.

One hundred and fifty miles out at sea from the mouth of this mighty river, steamers open their sea-cocks and take in water, for even at that great distance the water is fresh, so great is the volume poured out by the Amazon.

At Manaos the Rio Negro joins the Amazon, flowing down from Venezuela and Colombia, and, curiously enough, connecting with the great Orinoco and its tributaries. (You will remember that Captain Boynton made this water passage from river to river in "Looking for Trouble.") Well, the Negro, 2,000 miles from the mouth of the Amazon, is 25 miles wide for a distance of 300 miles, with islands as much as 60 miles long!

Incidentally, one of the tributaries of the Negro is the Branco, but this is not the Branco referred to in Mr. Lange's "My Friends the Cannibal Mangeromas." The latter stream wasn't on our office large-

scale map. It's plenty big enough to be, but that region is one of the very few that are still unknown to civilized man—at least, it's still uncharted on the most modern maps.

Mr. Lange sat down at a table with Mr. Olds and me and began filling in our map. It was an odd experience for us ordinary mortals. There was the only white man in the world who could plot out those rivers—the only white man who had ever seen some of them. Unless you count the very few Peruvian half-breed rubber-hunters who occasionally risked death in that region and who probably couldn't draw a map if their lives depended on it. You will recall that the Mangeromas ate a party of them while Mr. Lange was a guest of the tribe.

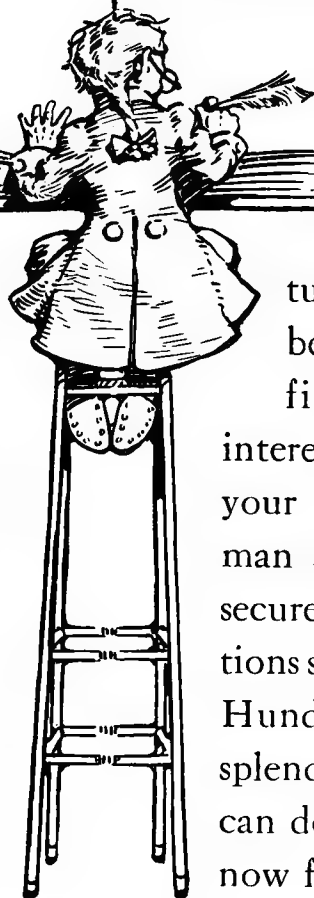
WHERE do the Mangeromas live? Put your pencil on the spot on the Amazon about where Ecuador, Peru and Brazil come together. Follow up the Javari River a few miles to where the Itahy joins in from the south. About there is Remate de Males ("Culmination of Evils"). Follow up the Itahy to where the Tecuahy flows in. (On our map the latter stream is printed in dots, indicating uncertain knowledge of science as to its course. Mr. Lange says it is properly spelled "Itecoahy.") Follow the Itecoahy up to where it branches. About where the dotted line of its eastern branch ends, some fifty miles north of the Jurua River, is Floresta, mentioned in Mr. Lange's article. Continue the dotted line south, and draw a tributary from the west. That will be the Branco. Now go back to the west branch of the Itecoahy; where that dotted line ends on the map live the Mangeromas, 72° W., 6° or 7° S. And if ever you want to be cooked and eaten, that is the place to go.

HERBERT RAVENEL SASS, whose story, "The Empty House," appears on page 191, is city editor of the Charleston (S. C.) *News and Courier*, but is never so happy as when out in the woods and is a contributor to such publications as *Bird Lore* and *The Auk*, as well as to general magazines like the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Collier's*, etc. One of his side-lines is being honorary snake-catcher for the Charlestown Museum.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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“E-yah! yah! Fight ‘em! Fight ‘em, Tiges!”

Every Fan in the country knows Hughie Jennings’s yell.

Picture this: **Cleveland 4. Detroit 1.**

One inning more. Can you *see* the Detroit Crowd? Rooters tense—silent—sullen. Air bristling—electric. Blanding pitching a winning game, mind you. All the *Cleavelands* cocky. Hallo! Who’s this at bat? Young Gainer! Pretty cool kid, eh? There they go. Watch him hunch his shoulders. See his body half turn and—Swat! did you hear that one? Wow! Get those 20,000 yells! See him clip it off. Gosh, what a dust he’s raising! Touches first! flashes to second! they’ve got him! No, no! he’s safe!! Whew! that was close.

Stannage up. Cheers like the roar of a storm. Bing! Biff! Ball crashes to left-field fence. Gainer tears home. Stannage safe at first. “E-yah! yah!” yells Hughie, mad with excitement. The crowd in a frenzy. Schmidt up. If he *only* can! Pipe Blanding winding up. Bing! Darned if it isn’t another hit—a daisy, cutter to right-field. Stannage to second. Schmidt an easy first. Two on bases. None out. Three runs to win. Crowd dippy with joy. Pitcher scowling. Tigers smelling blood.

Who’s next? Drake! the young recruit. What *can* Hughie mean? Well, too late now, anyhow. Looks spry enough. Rooters dead quiet. Hearts a-beat almost audibly. Tensity awful. What’s that? What’s that? For the love of Mike, Drake’s got a hit away over in left-field! Wow! there’s a swat too. Man on third leaps home. Drake safe at second! Hear the tramp of the feet, will you? 4 to 3. One to tie. Two to win. *Will they do it?*

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Adventure



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Managing Editor

1943

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HERE is your chance for real adventure and plenty of it! You remember "My Friends the Cannibal Mangeromas" in the June ADVENTURE—Algot Lange's account of one of his experiences among the tributaries of the upper Amazon. Well, he's going back. About September first. Under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania Museum. For three years. And he wants men—"good, strong, nervy men who know their value, to go with me to the Amazon, and believe me—they will see something that few men nowadays will ever see."

The object of the expedition is to study the savage tribes of this part of South America, much of which is entirely unknown territory, and to collect ethnological specimens for the University, but Mr. Lange is going to do a little zoological collecting on the side. For one thing, he wants to convince Mr. Ditmars, the reptile authority of the Bronx Zoo, New York City, that there are boa-constrictors fifty feet long in South America. On his former trip he says he saw one fifty-four feet long, and after he showed me a photograph of the trail left by that snake in the mud along a river-bank, I, for one, was ready to believe that the blooming thing was a hundred and fifty-four feet long if it was an inch.

HE TAKES a moving-picture outfit along with him. That's the way I want to see that fifty-foot snake—three years from now and via a moving-picture machine. Snakes are not a specialty of mine. Just measure off fifty feet and then let your imagination fill that distance with nothing but snake—large snake coming this way, of a girth you could just about put your arms around—that is, if you wanted to.

BUT to get down to brass tacks—and this expedition of Mr. Lange's is distinctly a matter of brass tacks. It is really an undertaking of very considerable importance to the scientific world, and as for adventure—well, can you beat it? To go where white men have never been before; to drop out of the world for three long years—perhaps forever; to bore your way for thousands of miles into the unknown

heart of a great continent; to face fever, starvation, wild beasts, poisonous insects and reptiles, cannibals; to meet all kinds of hardships and overcome them; to prove yourself a man down to the last atom of your body and mind and soul—what more of adventure can a man desire? You who read this, are you going?

Here is the official announcement.

The University of Pennsylvania announces that the plans for the South American Expedition have been definitely arranged. The man chosen for the leadership of the expedition is Algot Lange, whose experiences some time ago with a wild tribe of cannibals on the Amazon have created a great deal of interest in this country and in Europe.

His party will consist of five men, each of whom will be chosen on account of his special aptitude for the work which is cut out for him in the wilds of the far interior of the Amazon swamps, where the party will remain for three years.

The expedition will be furnished with a steamer which will be large and seaworthy enough to carry the party from New York to the mouth of the Amazon and up the Amazon for several thousand miles to the remote tributaries. In that far-off wilderness the only fuel obtainable is wood, and the steamer will be employed to carry the party as far as possible into the territories of the savage tribes who are to be investigated, and to transfer the collections which will be made down to their base at Manaos, capital of the state of Amazonas, Brazil, for transshipment on ocean-going steamers to New York and Philadelphia.

The expedition will be of greater magnitude and better prospects than any that have hitherto penetrated the South American wilds, and the results during the next three years should be of world-wide interest both to science and to the general public.

It is expected that the collections which will be made will be the best of the kind in the world and will surpass anything in America or in Europe from the interior of South America.

PROBABLY you have read Mr. Lange's article in the June ADVENTURE and perhaps you have heard him lecture. There was a bit more about him in the June "Camp-Fire" and another bit in our little page in the April number.

And if this adventure stirs your blood and you wish to join the expedition, you can write to Mr. Lange in our care and your letter will be forwarded.

Meanwhile there's something about the country in question in the "Camp-Fire" at the end of this number. Probably there'll be some more next month.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN

